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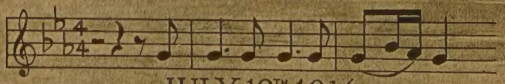

JULY-19TH-1916

Charles Webb Etheridge

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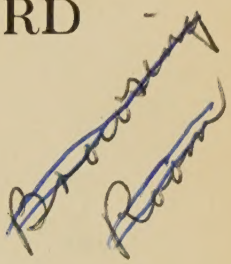
Vol. 2

DRAMATIC OPINIONS AND ESSAYS WITH AN APOLOGY BY BERNARD SHAW



CONTAINING AS WELL

A WORD ON THE DRAMATIC OPINIONS AND ESSAYS OF BERNARD SHAW BY JAMES HUNEKER

VOLUME TWO

NEW YORK: BRENTANO'S
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PAGE

For England, Home, and Beauty 181
The Echegaray Matinées 188
Gallery Rowdyism 197
Madox Brown, Watts, and Ibsen 206
Shakespeare in Manchester 213
Meredith on Comedy 222
Mr. Pinero on Turning Forty 231
Madame Sans-Gêne 241
John Gabriel Borkman 248
A Doll's House Again 258
Ibsen Triumphant 266
Mainly About Shakespeare 275
Robertson Redivivus 284
Lorenzaccio 290
Ghosts at the Jubilee 299
Mr. Grundy's Improvements on Dumas . . . 307
"Hamlet" 316
At Several Theatres 326
The Theatres 334
Romance in its Last Ditch 342
Vegetarian and Arboreal 352
Chin Chon Chino 360
Shakespeare and Mr. Barrie 365
On Pleasure Bent 375
A Breath from the Spanish Main 383
Hamlet Revisited 390
Peace and Good Will to Managers 395

PAGE

Tappertit on Cæsar 400

Mr. Pinero's Past 409

Beaumont and Fletcher 418

Shakespeare's Merry Gentlemen 422

The Drama in Hoxton 429

Mr. Charles Frohman's Mission 438

The Drama Purified 443

Kate Terry 448

Van Amburgh Revived 455

G. B. S. Vivisected 463

Valedictory 468

THE NEW MAGDA AND THE NEW CYPRIENNE

Magda: a play in four acts. Translated by Louis N. Parker from Hermann Sudermann's "Home." Lyceum Theatre, 3 June, 1896.
The Queen's Proctor: a comedy in three acts. Adapted by Herman Merivale from "Divorçons," by Victorien Sardou and E. de Najac. Royalty Theatre, 2 June, 1896.

IN all the arts there is a distinction between the mere physical artistic faculty, consisting of a very fine sense of color, form, tone, rhythmic movement, and so on, and that supreme sense of humanity which alone can raise the art work created by the physical artistic faculties into a convincing presentment of life. Take the art of acting, for instance. The physically gifted actor can fill in a conventional artistic outline with great charm. He — or she (I really mean she, as will appear presently) — can move exquisitely within the prescribed orbit of a dance, can ring out the measure of a line of blank verse to a hair's-breadth, can devise a dress well and wear it beautifully, can, in short, carry out with infinite fascination the design of any dramatic work that aims at sensuous and romantic beauty alone. But present this same fascinating actress with a work to the execution of which the sense of humanity is the only clue, in which there is no verse to guide the voice and no dance to guide the body, in which

every line must appear ponderously dull and insignificant unless its truth as the utterance of a deeply moved human soul can be made apparent, in which the epicurean admiration of her as an exquisite apparition, heightened, of course, by sex attraction, can be but a trifling element in the deep sympathy with her as a fellow-creature which is produced by a great dramatist's revelation of ourselves to our own consciousness through her part, and then you may very possibly see your bewitching artist making a quite childish failure on the very boards where a little while before she was disputing the crown of her profession with the greatest actresses in the world.

If you doubt me, then do you, if you have had the good fortune to see Mrs. Patrick Campbell play Militza in "For the Crown" like an embodied picture or poem of the decorative romantic type, now go and see her play Magda. And go soon; for the play will not run long: human nature will not endure such a spectacle for many weeks. That is not the fault of the play, which does not fail until she kills it. At the end of the first act, before Magda appears, the applause has a rising flood in it which shows that the house is caught by the promise of the drama. Ten minutes after Mrs. Campbell's entry it is all over: thenceforward the applause, though complimentary and copious, is from the lips outward. The first-night audience had for the most part seen Bernhardt and Duse in the part, and knew what could be done with it. Nobody, I presume, was so foolishly unreasonable as to expect anything approaching the wonderful impersonation by Duse at Drury Lane, when she first played the part here last year. Mrs. Campbell has not lived long enough to get as much work crammed into her entire

repertory as Duse gets into every ten minutes of her Magda. Nor has she had sufficient stage experience to polish off the part with the businesslike competence of the golden Sarah, coming down with her infallible stroke on every good stage point in the dialogue, and never letting the play drag for an instant. But even if the audience had never seen either Bernhardt or Duse, it could not have mistaken Mrs. Campbell for a competent Magda, although it might very possibly have mistaken the play for a dull and prosy one. The fact is, if Mrs. Campbell's irresistible physical gifts and her cunning eye for surface effects had only allowed her to look as silly as she really was in the part (and in one or two passages she very nearly achieved this), her failure would have been as obvious to the greenest novice in the house as it was to me. Take such a dramatic moment, for instance, as that in which Magda receives, first the card, and then the visit of Von Keller, the runaway father of her child. Let us leave Duse's incomparable acting of that scene out of the question, even if it is impossible to forget it. But with Mrs. Campbell it was not merely a falling short of Duse that one had to complain of. She literally did nothing. From the point at which Miss Caldwell, as the servant, brought in the card, to the point at which Magda, her emotion mastered, good-humoredly shakes hands with the fellow (how capitally vulgarly Sarah did that!), Mrs. Campbell did not display as much feeling as an ordinary woman of fifty does at the arrival of the postman. Whether her nonentity at this point was the paralysis of a novice who does not know how to express what she feels, or whether it was the vacuity of a woman who does not feel at all, I cannot determine. The result was that the audience did not

realize that anything particular was supposed to be happening; and those who had seen the play before wondered why it should be so much less intelligible in English than in a foreign language.

Let me give one other instance. Quite the easiest line in the piece is the prima donna's remark, when she hears about Marie's lieutenant lover, "A lieutenant! with us it 's always a tenor." Mrs. Campbell actually succeeded in delivering that speech without making any one smile. At the other end of the compass of the piece we have the terrible line which strikes the Colonel dead at the end — "How do you know that he was the only one?" (meaning "How do you know that this man Von Keller, whom you want me to marry to make an honest woman of me, is the only man who has been my lover?"). Mrs. Campbell made an obvious attempt to do something with this line at the last moment. But there is nothing to be done with it except prepare its effect by acting beforehand so as to make the situation live, and then let it do its own work. Between these two failures I can recall no success; indeed, I can hardly recall any effort that went far enough to expose Mrs. Campbell to the risk of active failure. Although she was apparently doing her best with the part, her best let its best slip by her, and only retained its commonplaces.

The part of Magda is no doubt one in which a young actress may very well be excused for failing. But from the broad point of view of our national interest in art, it is necessary, when work of the class of Sudermann's is in question, to insist on the claim of the public to have the best dramas of the day presented in English by the fittest talent. Mrs. Campbell was entitled to her turn; but now that it is clear that the

part does not suit her, are we to have it locked up lest any other actress should demonstrate that it can be done better? Are we to have no chance of seeing how it would come out in the hands of the actresses who have shown a special aptitude for this class of work? Miss Elizabeth Robins would certainly not play Militza half as effectively as Mrs. Campbell; but can it be doubted by any one who has seen her play Hilda Wangel that she would play Magda, especially in the self-assertive scenes, twenty times better than Mrs. Campbell? Miss Robins can assert herself more youthfully, and pity herself more pathetically, than any actress on our stage. Doubtless she might fail to convince us in the sympathetic, grandly maternal phases of the character, but what about Miss Janet Achurch for that side of it? Miss Achurch, with no copyright monopoly of "A Doll's House," has never been approached as Nora Helmer: Mrs. Campbell's attempt at Magda is the merest baby-play in comparison with that performance. These able and energetic women who pioneered the new movement have had, so far, little to repay them except unlimited opportunities of looking on at fashionable dramas, in which placidly pretty and pleasant actresses enjoy a heyday of popular success by exhibiting themselves in expensive frocks, and going amiably through half a dozen tricks which they probably amuse themselves by teaching to their poodles when they are at a loss for something better to do. The managers are quite right to keep actresses of the calibre of Miss Achurch and Miss Robins out of such business: they would be more likely to knock an ordinary fashionable play to pieces than to become popular pets in it — after all, one does not want a Great Western locomotive to carry one's afternoon tea upstairs.

But if the managers are going in for Sudermann and Ibsen, and serious work generally, then in the name of common sense let them show us something more of the people who have proved themselves able to handle such work, and keep their pretty dolls for dolls' work.

However, if Mrs. Patrick Campbell has just shown that she is not yet a great actress, she is at any rate an artist; and nobody can complain of her having tried Magda, if only there is no attempt to prevent others from trying also. The circumstances were not altogether favorable to her. It is true that she was supported by the best Pastor Hefferdingh we have seen — Mr. Forbes Robertson was admirable in the character; but the all-important Colonel Schwartze was disastrous: Mr. Fernandez exhibited every quality of the old actor except the quality of being able to understand his part. Miss Alice Mansfield, as the agitated aunt, forgot that she was playing first-class drama in the Lyceum Theatre, and treated us to the grimaces and burlesque prolongations of her words with which she is accustomed to raise a laugh in farcical comedies. And Mr. Gillmore, as Lieutenant Max, had not a touch of the smart German subaltern about him. Otherwise there was nothing to complain of. Mr. Scott Buist, whose success as Tesman in "Hedda Gabler" has taught him the value of thoroughly modern parts, did not, especially in the earlier scenes, adapt himself sufficiently to the large size of the theatre, nor could he surpass the inimitable Von Keller of Sarah Bernhardt's company; but, for all that, he understood the part and played it excellently. Miss Brooke's Marie was spoiled by Mrs. Campbell's Magda. She conveyed the impression of being a respectable young woman, with a rather loose and good-for-nothing kind of sister,

instead of being clearly weaker in her conventionality than Magda in her independence.

Mr. Herman Merivale's adaptation of "Divorçons" began by putting me out of temper. First, we had the inevitable two servants gossiping about their employers' affairs, their pretended function being to expound the plot, their real one to bore the audience sufficiently to make the principals doubly welcome when they arrive. Why do not those ridiculous people in the gallery who persist in hissing the author when all the mischief is over make themselves useful by venting their destructive rage on those two Sardovian servants? Then the supernumerary persons — the visitors, and so on — were tiresome, and did not know how to behave themselves as people behave in country houses. I do not recommend the manners of a dull country house to actors and actresses in private life: I am well aware that there is no time for them in London, even if they were admirable in themselves; but I do suggest that it is a wasteful mistake to spend a good deal of money in mounting a country-house scene realistically, and then spoil all the illusion by the gush and rush, the violent interest in everything and the eagerly false goodfellowship so characteristic of theatrical at-homes, and so markedly foreign to county society. Then, again, Cyprienne, instead of being translated into her English equivalent, became a purely fantastic person, nominally an Italian lady married to an English squire, but really a purely imaginary incarnation of the pet qualities of her sex. The Italian pretext involved that most exasperating of all theatrical follies and nuisances, the pet resource of the spurious actor who goes to his make-up box for character and to some mimic's trick for his speech, a stage foreign accent. At the

end of the first act I was in the worst possible temper with the whole performance, the more so as the incident of the electric bell all but missed fire, partly because the bell, far from being startling, was hardly audible, and partly because the two performers, instead of stopping paralyzed, and letting the very funny effect make itself (as it always does in this way infallibly with Chaumont), tried to work it up with excited action and speeches, which, of course, simply distracted attention from it.

But I was unable to maintain this unfavorable attitude. The shelter of a furze bush will give courage to a soldier under fire; and it may be that the tiny shelter from a too ladylike self-consciousness afforded by the foreign accent made Miss Violet Vanbrugh reckless. At all events she let herself go to such purpose that before the second act was over she had completely changed her professional standing. I asked myself could this be the same lady who was lately ambling and undulating, with the most acutely intentional archness and grace, through "The Chili Widow," and being admired and tolerated as a popular hostess rather than nailing the attention and interest of her audience as an actress. At that time I should have abandoned hope of Miss Vanbrugh as a comedian but for my recollection of a certain burlesque of "The Master Builder," in which — again, observe, having an excuse for letting herself go — she impressed me prodigiously. I suspect that Miss Vanbrugh has hitherto lamed herself by trying to arrive at Miss Ellen Terry's secret from without inward, instead of working out her own secret from within outward. However that may be, the position into which she sprang last Tuesday, with the most decisive success, is that of Mrs. Kendal, which, owing to the

prolonged epidemic of handsome idiocy among our leading ladies and sentimental inanity among our authors, has been vacant for a ridiculously long period. "The Queen's Proctor" is now the most amusing play in London: it is worth going to for nothing else than to hear Miss Vanbrugh protest, "It is not jealousy, but c—uriosity." Mr. Bourchier, a born actor, and in fact the only first-rate light comedian of his generation (the rest either cannot make us laugh or can do nothing else), plays to Miss Violet Vanbrugh as perhaps only a husband can play to his wife — at least with the unmixed approbation of the British public. Although the first act of the piece has been sacrificed somewhat in the adaptation, the adapting device employed in it enables the succeeding acts to follow the original in all its witty liveliness. And now that Mr. Bourchier has got a real play and a real part, he no longer trifles with his work. I was never convinced before Tuesday night that his career as a manager was assured; but now that Mrs. Bourchier's genius has got loose with such astonishing and delightful suddenness, and he is attacking his own work seriously, the prospects of the combination appear to be unlimited. There is some capital playing in the piece by Mr. W. G. Elliott as Cæsar Borgia (our old friend Adhemar), Mr. Hendrie, and Mr. Kinghorne, who is pathetically funny (much the finest way of being funny) as a Scotch waiter. I congratulate Mr. Bourchier heartily on his first genuine success.

MISS NETHERSOLE AND MRS. KENDAL

Carmen: a dramatic version of Prosper Mérimée's novel. By Henry Hamilton. In four acts. Gaiety Theatre, 6 June, 1896.
The Wanderer from Venus; or, Twenty-four Hours with an Angel: a new and original fanciful comedy. By Robert Buchanan and Charles Marlowe. New Grand Theatre, Croydon, 8 June, 1896.
The Greatest of These ——: a play in four acts. By Sydney Grundy. Garrick Theatre, 10 June, 1896.

I AM ordinarily a patient man and a culpably indulgent critic; but I fear I must ask the responsible parties, whoever they are, what they mean by this "Carmen" business at the Gaiety Theatre? Are we to have no credit in London for knowing, I will not say fine art from fashionable art, because that we unfortunately do not know, but at least fashionable art from unfashionable? We may be vague in our notions of the difference between a thirteenth-century church and a seventeenth-century one, a costume designed by a comic-opera costumier and one painted by Benozzo Gozzoli, a Leadenhall Press book and a Kelmscott Press one, or a Mrs. Ebbsmith and a Magda; but at all events we can distinguish between Kensington Palace Gardens or Fitzjohn's Avenue and the Old Kent Road, between a suit turned out by a Savile Row tailor and one purchased at a Jamaica Road slopshop, between the "Century Magazine" and a broadsheet of ballads, and between Mrs. Ebbsmith and Maria Martin, the heroine of "The Murder in the Red Barn." Why,

then, attempt to put us off, at the height of the season, with such a piece of work as this new version of "Carmen"? I am too good-natured to deliberately set to work to convey an adequate notion of what a very poor, cheap, tawdry business it is; but some idea of the class of audience to which it has been written down may perhaps be gathered from the fact that when Carmen is cajoling the dragoon in the first act, she repeatedly turns to the audience — the London audience — and remarks, aside, "He thinks I am in earnest" or the like, lest we, unsophisticated yokels as we are, might possibly be misled by her arts into accepting her as the sympathetic heroine. The dialogue only rises, not without effort, to the point of making the bare story intelligible to those of us who know the opera by heart already. I say the opera; for the description of the work as "a dramatic version of Prosper Mérimée's novel" is quite misleading. If it were not for the first scene of the second act — which ought to be cut out — nobody could possibly suspect the author of having ever read a line of Mérimée. The true original is, of course, the libretto; and all the departures made from its scenario are blunders. The superfluous scene just mentioned could only be rendered endurable by very expressive physical acting on the parts of Carmen and José. But the author has so little stagecraft that he makes it take place in the dark, where, accordingly, it is not endurable. Again, in the tavern scene, Dolores-Michaela enters and makes an appeal to Carmen's better nature! And Carmen, after being stabbed, and dying a screaming, burgling, rattling, "realistic" death, compounded of all the stage colics and convulsions ever imagined, suddenly comes to life and dies over again in the older operatic manner, like Edgardo in

"Lucia," warbling "I love you, I love you." What is a critic expected to say to such folly?

The execution of this tedious, inept, absurd, and at its most characteristic moments positively asinine play only emphasized its defects. In the course of my musical experiences I have seen a great many Carmens. The earlier ones aimed at something like the Carmen of Mérimée, the gipsy of a gentleman's imagination, a Carmen with holes in her stockings, ready to beg, steal, fight, or trade with her own person as a matter of course, but still a Carmen with her point of honor, scandalized and angry because José jealously killed her hideous old husband with a knife thrust instead of buying her from him in the correct gipsy manner for a few shillings, and brave to grandeur in confronting her death, brought on her, not by the extravagance of her own misconduct, but by the morbid constitutional jealousy of the melancholy hidalgo-dragoon. When Trebelli played the part, for instance, there was not the slightest hint in her performance of the influence of that naturalistic movement which was presently to turn Carmen into a disorderly, lascivious, good-for-nothing factory girl. There was nothing of it even in Selina Dolaro's Carmen, except that the assumption of one of Trebelli's parts by an opera-bouffe artist was itself a sign of the times. The first prima donna who definitely substituted the Zola Carmen for the Mérimée Carmen was Marie Roze, who never did anything quite competently, and yet could coax the public to come to see her do everything incompetently. One forgave her Carmen as one forgives Manon Lescaut: whatever else she may have been, she was lovable. The next notable Carmen was Giulia Ravogli. Nobody but she has given us the free, roving, open-air Carmen, strong of body,

prompt of hand, genuinely and not ignobly contemptuous of civilization. But Ravogli, though she played to every turn of the orchestra with a masterly understanding of the score, and a precision and punctuality of pantomimic action which I have never seen surpassed either by the best French performers in ballet of the "Enfant Prodigue" type, or by such German Wagnerian artists as Alvary in "Siegfried," was too roughly real and powerful for what is at best but a delicately flimsy little opera; and the part was left to the pretty pettishnesses and ladylike superficialities of Miss Zélie de Lussan until Calve took it up. Calve, an artist of genius, divested Carmen of the last rag of romance and respectability: it is not possible to describe in decent language what a rapscallion she made of her. But the comedy of her audacities was irresistible. Her lewd grin at the officer after her arrest, the hitch of the dress by which she exhibited her ankle and defined the outline of her voluptuous figure for his inspection; her contemptuous lack of all interest in Michaela's face, followed by a jealous inspection of the exuberance of her hips; her self-satisfied glance at her own figure from the same point of view in the looking-glass in the second act when she heard José approaching: all these strokes were not only so many instantaneous dramas in themselves, taking you every time into the heart of the character, but were executed with such genuine artistic force that you could no more help enjoying them than you could help enjoying the sottishnesses of Falstaff if only Falstaff were played by a great comedian. Calve wasted no romantic flattery on her Carmen — allowed her no courage, nothing but rowdiness, no heart, no worth, no positive vice even beyond what her taste for coarse pleasures might lead her to; and

she made her die with such frightful art than when the last flopping, reeling, disorganized movement had died out of her, you felt that there was nothing lying there but a lump of carrion. Here you had no mere monkey mimicry of this or that antic of a street girl, but great acting in all its qualities, interpretation, invention, selection, creation, and fine execution, with the true tragi-comic force behind it. And yet it was hard to forgive Calve for the performance, since the achievement, though striking enough, was, for an artist of her gifts, too cheap to counterbalance the degradation of her beauty and the throwing away of her skill on a study from vulgar life which was, after all, quite foreign to the work on which she imposed it.

Miss Olga Nethersole, in her attempt to exploit the reputation which all these opera-singers have made for Carmen, is too heavily handicapped by the inevitable comparison with them. If her acting version had been made by a dramatist capable of supplying an equivalent for the charm and distinction of Mérimée's narrative or the delicate romance of Bizet's music; or if she herself, by insight, humor, and finesse of execution, were able to impose on the piece, such as it is, a fascinating, quasi-realistic character-fantasy of the Macaire order, she might possibly have made the play tolerable after the opera. But none of these conditions are fulfilled for her. She has the staginess of an old actress with the inexpertness of a young one; her Carmen ridiculously combines the realistic sordidness and vulgarity of a dissolute rag-picker with the old-fashioned modish airs and graces, the mantilla, comb, fan, castanets, and dancing-shoes of the stage Spanish gipsies whom our grandmothers admired; and she has not a spark of humor. Her vocal accomplishments are so slender

that, instead of genuinely speaking, like her colleague, Miss Alexes Leighton, she intones in the manner of some of our naturally voiceless melodramatic actors; but being unable to complete their effective simulation of a powerful voice by copying their sharp, athletic articulation, she relies rather on mere inflections, which are intolerably monotonous, and too feeble to send even her vowels clearly across the footlights. Her facial play, obscured by a heavily blackleaded impressionist make-up, seems limited to a couple of expressions: No. 1, drawn mouth and jaw, with stretched, staring eyes for tragic presentiment of fate; No. 2, for seduction, a smile with the eyes exactly as before and the lips strongly retracted to display the lower teeth, both effects being put on and off suddenly like masks. In short, judged by this performance, Miss Nethersole is not yet even a proficient actress, much less a great one. Why, then, it may be asked have we heard so much of her Carmen? I can only answer that those who really want to know had better go and see it. Acting is not the only spectacle that people will stop to look at, though it is the only one with which I am concerned here.

I note with satisfaction that the suburban theatre has now advanced another step. On Monday a new play by Mr. Robert Buchanan and his collaborator, "Charles Marlowe," was produced at the new theatre at Croydon — a theatre which is to some of our Strand theatres as a Pullman drawing-room car is to an old second-class carriage — with a company which includes Miss Kate Rorke, Mr. Oswald Yorke, Mr. Beauchamp, Mr. Anson, Miss Eva Moore, and Miss Vera Beringer. The band played the inevitable overture to "Raymond" and Mr. German's dances, for all the

world as if we were at the Vaudeville. I paid three shillings for a stall, and twopence for a programme. Add to this the price of a first-class return ticket from London, three and sixpence (and you are under no compulsion to travel first class if second or third will satisfy your sense of dignity), and the visit to the Croydon Theatre costs three and tenpence less than the bare price of a stall in the Strand. And as Miss Kate Rorke not only plays the part of an angel in her most touching manner, but flies bodily up to heaven at the end of the play, to the intense astonishment of the most hardened playgoers, there is something sensational to talk about afterwards. The play is a variation on the Pygmalion and Galatea theme. It is full of commonplace ready-made phrases to which Mr. Buchanan could easily have given distinction and felicity if he were not absolutely the laziest and most perfunctory workman in the entire universe, save only when he is writing letters to the papers, rehabilitating Satan, or committing literary assault and battery on somebody whose works he has not read. I cannot help suspecting that even the trouble of finding the familiar subject was saved him by a chance glimpse of some review of Mr. Wells' last story but one. Yet the play holds your attention and makes you believe in it: the born storyteller's imagination is in it unmistakably, and saves it from the just retribution provoked by the author's lack of a good craftsman's conscience.

Mrs. Kendal should really be more cautious than she was at the Garrick on Wednesday night. When you feed a starving castaway you do not give him a full meal at once: you accustom him gradually to food by giving him small doses of soup. Mrs. Kendal, forgetting that London playgoers have been starved for

years in the matter of acting, inconsiderately gave them more in the first ten minutes than they have had in the last five years, with the result that the poor wretches became hysterical, and vented their applause in sobs and shrieks. And yet in the old days at the St. James's they would have taken it all as a matter of course, and perhaps grumbled at the play into the bargain. Mrs. Kendal is actually better than ever, now that the pretty ladylike drama of her earlier triumphs is as obsolete as croquet. It is true that in spite of being on her guard in London, she occasionally throws a word at the heads of the audience in such a declamatory way as to raise a mild suspicion that she has perhaps not been wasting her finest methods on the less cultivated sections of the American nation. But her finish of execution, her individuality and charm of style, her appetizingly witty conception of her effects, her mastery of her art and of herself — that mastery for which her amateurish successors are trying to substitute mere abandonment — are all there, making her still supreme among English actresses in high comedy, whilst even in cheap sentiment, for which she has too much brains and character, and in which, consequently, her methods are entirely artificial, the artifice is so skilful and so sympathetic that she makes her audience cry with the greatest ease. Some years ago there was a tendency to mistake the wearing out of the "Scrap of Paper"-cum-"Ironmaster" repertory for the wearing out of Mrs. Kendal's long success and great prestige. For my part, I see no reason to doubt that if she can only be convinced that London is as tired of that repertory as she is herself (which is probably putting the case strongly), the most serious part of her career may be beginning instead of ending.

As to Mr. Grundy's piece, it has the advantage of being violently polemical and didactic; and there is nothing the British public loves better in a play, provided, of course, that it is also dramatic. "The Greatest of These ——" is dramatic up to the brief but unbearable fourth act, which drops all semblance of drama and is simply and frankly nothing but the chairman's superfluous summing up of the discussion. Ten years ago this play, with its open preaching of the rights of humanity as against virtues, religions, respectabilities, and other manufactured goods — especially the provincial varieties — would have ranked as an insanity only fit for the Independent Theatre. To-day, after Ibsen and Nietzsche, the only objection to it is that it is rather too crude, parochial, and old-fashioned an expression of an inspiriting and universal philosophy; and it went down, accordingly, like one of Dr. Watts's hymns. The general presentation of the piece was so far inevitably false as a picture of English provincial society that Mrs. Kendal was a great deal too clever for Warminster, the atmosphere being that of South Kensington or Regent's Park rather than of Salisbury Plain; but, subject to this qualification, the management was first-rate. Miss Nellie Campbell's Grace Armitage was a good piece of professional work — even the brilliant successes of nowadays are seldom that — and Mr. Nutcombe Gould and Mr. Kemble were well within their powers in the other parts. Mr. Rodney Edgcumbe, no doubt, shocked the principals by describing himself as "stowny browk"; but they will soon get used to that. They have probably found out already that any sort of diction is considered good enough for the stage nowadays. As to Mr. Kendal, one can only give him

the old advice — get divorced. He is a capital comedian; and yet in the whole course of this play he can only steal one laugh in the first act. For the rest, he outrages his nature and genius faithfully in support of his wife in a hopeless part; and the audience, if not delighted, is as least moved by the melancholy dignity of the sacrifice.

SOME OTHER CRITICS

Dramatic Essays. By John Forster and George Henry Lewes. Reprinted from the "Examiner" (1835–38) and "The Leader" (1850–54). With Notes and an Introduction by William Archer and Robert Lowe. London: Walter Scott. 1896.

Mam'zelle Nitouche: a musical comedy in three acts by MM. Meilhac, Millaud, and Hervé. Royal Court Theatre, 1 June, 1896.

THE rate of production at the theatres has been so rapid lately that I am conscious of putting off my remarks on performances just as I habitually put off answering letters, in the hope that the march of events will presently save me the trouble of dealing with them. My labors, it must be remembered, are the labors of Sisyphus: every week I roll my heavy stone to the top of the hill; and every week I find it at the bottom again. To the public the tumbling down of the stone is the point of the whole business: they like to see it plunging and bounding and racing in a flying cloud of dust, blackening the eyes of a beautiful actress here and catching an eminent actor-

manager in the wind there, flattening out dramatists, demolishing theatres, and generally taking a great deal on itself, considering its size. But the worst of it (from my point of view) is that when it is all over I am the only person who is a penny the worse. The actresses are as beautiful and popular as ever; the actor-managers wallow in the profits of the plays I have denounced; the dramatists receive redoubled commissions; the theatres reopen with programmes foolisher than before; and nothing remains of my toy avalanche but the stone at my feet to be rolled up again before the fatigue of the last heave is out of my bones. Sometimes I ask myself whether anybody ever reads critical articles — whether the whole thing is not a mere editorial illusion, a superstition from the purely academic origin of critical journalism. That I, under the compulsion of my daily needs, should face the weekly task of writing these columns is intelligible enough; but that you, reader (if you exist), should under no compulsion at all face the weekly task of reading them merely to keep me in bread and butter is an amazing, incredible thing to me. Yet people do it. They not only want to hear me chattering about Mrs. Patrick Campbell, but actually to hear the ghosts of Forster and Lewes chattering about the ghosts of Macready and Forrest, Charles Kean and Rachel. Here is Mr. Walter Scott, a publisher who knows by experience what the public will stand in this way, issuing a handsome three-and-sixpenny volume of the "Examiner" and "Leader" articles of these dead and gone critics, edited by Mr. Robert Lowe and my colleague, Mr. William Archer, who has his own stone to roll up every week. The book contains no portrait of Forster: perhaps the editors thought that Dickens's

word-picture of him as "a harbitrary gent" could not be improved on; but there is a photograph of Lewes which suggests to me the fearful question, "Are *we* at all like that?"

I recommend the series of dramatic essays of which this book is the third volume to all actors who pretend to be indifferent to the opinion of such persons as myself; for it proves beyond contradiction that the actor who desires enduring fame must seek it at the hands of the critic, and not of the casual playgoer. Money and applause he may have in plenty from the contemporary mob; but posterity can only see him through the spectacles of the elect: if he displease *them*, his credit will be interred with his bones. The world believes Edmund Kean to have been a much greater actor than Junius Brutus Booth solely because Hazlitt thought so. Its belief in the inferiority of Forrest to Macready is not its own opinion, but Forster's. The one failure of Charles Kean's life that matters now is his failure to impress Lewes in anything higher than melodrama. Some day they will reprint my articles; and then what will all your puffs and long runs and photographs and papered houses and cheap successes avail you, O lovely leading ladies and well-tailored actor-managers? The twentieth century, if it concerns itself about either of us, will see you as I see you. Therefore study my tastes, flatter me, bribe me, and see that your acting-managers are conscious of my existence and impressed with my importance.

Both Lewes and Forster had the cardinal faculty of the critic: they could really and objectively see the stage; and they could analyze what they saw there. In this respect Forster is as good as Hazlitt or Lewes: he is a first-rate demonstrator, and can take an actor

to pieces and put him together again as well as anybody. But his outlook on the general human life in relation to which the theatre must always be judged, is not so lofty, keen, and free-minded as that of Hazlitt, who was something of a genius; and he had not Lewes's variety of culture, flexibility, and fun. I consider that Lewes in some respects anticipated me, especially in his free use of vulgarity and impudence whenever they happened to be the proper tools for his job. He had the rare gift of integrity as a critic. When he was at his business, he seldom remembered that he was a gentleman or a scholar. In this he showed himself a true craftsman, intent on making the measurements and analyses of his criticism as accurate, and their expression as clear and vivid, as possible, instead of allowing himself to be distracted by the vanity of playing the elegant man of letters, or writing with perfect good taste, or hinting in every line that he was above his work. In exacting all this from himself, and taking his revenge by expressing his most labored conclusions with a levity that gave them the air of being the unpremeditated whimsicalities of a man who had perversely taken to writing about the theatre for the sake of the jest latent in his own outrageous unfitness for it, Lewes rolled his stone up the hill quite in the modern manner of Mr. Walkley, dissembling its huge weight, and apparently kicking it at random hither and thither in pure wantonness. In fact, he reminds Mr. William Archer of a writer called "Corno di Bassetto," * who was supposed — among other impostures — to have introduced this style of writing when Mr. T. P. O'Connor invented the halfpenny evening paper in 1888. But these articles of

* G. B. S. himself.

Lewes's are miles beyond the crudities of Di Bassetto, though the combination of a laborious criticism with a recklessly flippant manner is the same in both. Lewes, by the way, like Bassetto, was a musical critic. He was an adventurous person as critics go; for he not only wrote philosophical treatises and feuilletons, but went on the stage, and was denounced by Barry Sullivan as "a poor creature," perhaps for the feebleness of his execution, but perhaps also a little because he tried to get away from the superhuman style of Barry into the path since opened up by Irving. He also wrote plays of the kind which, as a critic, he particularly disliked. And he was given to singing — nothing will ever persuade me that a certain passage in "The Impressions of Theophrastus Such" about an amateur vocalist who would persist in wrecking himself on "O Ruddier than the Cherry" does not refer to Lewes. Finally he was rash enough to contract a morganatic union with the most famous woman writer of his day, a novelist, thereby allowing his miserable affections to triumph over his critical instincts (which he appears, however, to have sometimes indulged clandestinely in spite of himself); and so, having devoted some years to remonstrating with people who persisted in addressing the famous novelist by her maiden name instead of as "Mrs. Lewes," he perished after proving conclusively in his own person that "womanly self-sacrifice" is an essentially manly weakness. The history of that interesting union yet remains to be written. Neither cynic nor heroine worshipper will ever do it justice; but George Eliot at least paid it the widow's compliment of marrying again, though she did not select a critic this time. These and other features of Lewes's career are dealt with from the point of view

of the general reader in Mr. Archer's very interesting forty pages of introduction. From my personal point of view, they are, on the whole, a solemn warning. I shall not marry, morganatically or otherwise. Eminent lady novelists will please accept this notice.

Miss May Yohe might, I think, have given us something fresher at the Court Theatre than a revival of "Mam'zelle Nitouche." I take it that Miss Yohe is not now living by her profession and compelled to accept what engagements may come her way, leaving to her managers the responsibility of choosing the piece. She is, is she not, in an independent position, gained by alliance with the British aristocracy, and subject to all the social responsibilities attaching to that sort of independence? These responsibilities do not, of course, demand that she should share in the patriarchal administration of the family estate if she is driven by irresistible instincts to seek her natural activity on the stage as an artist. Nobody can object to that alternative course, nor to her subsidizing the theatre out of her revenues — not earned, be it remembered, by herself, but derived at some point or other from the nation's industries. Clearly the revenues and the artistic activity cannot honorably be wasted on unworthy or stale entertainments merely, as the professional phrase goes, to give the manageress a show. If a lady wants nothing more than that, she must conform to social discipline and take her show in the prescribed ladylike way, either plastering herself with diamonds and sitting in an opera-box like a wax-figure in a jeweller's shop window, or dressing herself prettily and driving up and down the Row in the afternoon to be stared at by all the world and his wife. Whether in sanctioning the necessary expenditure for this purpose the nation

makes a wise bargain or not, shall not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that it is an extremely liberal one for the lady, and need not be enlarged so as to include appearances on the stage as well as in the auditorium and in the Row. For just consider what would happen if acting under professional conditions became as fashionable as cycling. We should have every theatre in London taken at extravagant rents by fashionable amateurs; and art would be banished to the suburbs and the provinces. If, however, a lady comes forward to supersede the ordinary commercial manager out of pure love of the theatre and a determination to rescue the lighter forms of musical art from the rowdiness and indecency which popular gagging comedians have been allowed to introduce into it of late years, then she is within the sphere of her most serious social duties as much as if she were interesting herself in orphanages and hospitals. This, I take it, is the honorable construction to which Miss May Yohe's enterprise is entitled *prima facie.*

Unfortunately, it is very hard to feel that the Court performance bears out such a view. Miss May Yohe is too clever — too much the expert professional — to be dismissed as a stage-struck fashionable amateur; but, on the other hand, there is nothing either in "Mam'zelle Nitouche" nor in the style of its performance to explain why any lady should step out of the aristocratic sphere to produce it. I noticed that Mr. Mackinder, an agile and clever comedian who sedulously cultivates the style of Mr. Arthur Roberts, permitted himself, in the first act, to interrupt Miss Haydon with a quip which might possibly have made a schoolboy grin, but which was disrespectful to the audience, to his fellow-artists, to Miss Yohe as the

responsible manager, to his art, and to himself. In the green-rooms of some music-halls they post a notice warning performers not to interpolate any objectionable pleasantries into their songs and dialogue on pain of instant cancelling of their engagement. It seems time to post this notice in all our comic opera houses except the Savoy. When a lady who bears a title in private life undertakes the management of a West End theatre, one hopes that there, at least, no such precaution could be necessary; and yet, as I have said, Mr. Mackinder had not been ten minutes on the stage before he improvised a jest that made every decent person in the theatre shiver, and did it, too, in perfect good faith, with a hardworking desire to show his smartness and make his part "go." For the rest, there was nothing to complain of, and nothing to admire particularly. Miss Florence Levey gave us a very lively and confident imitation — but only an imitation — of a skilled dancer and singer. Mr. Tapley, whom I can remember when he was a tenor, can still inflect certain falsetto tones sufficiently to be called, by a stretch of compliment, a tenorino. Miss Yohe's own extraordinary artificial contralto had so little tone on the first night that it was largely mistaken for an attack of hoarseness; and her sentimental song, with its aborted cadence which sought to make a merit and a feature of its own weakness, was only encored, not quite intentionally, out of politeness. Her sustaining power seems gone: she breathes after every little phrase, and so cannot handle a melody in her old broad rich manner; but doubtless the remedy for this is a mere matter of getting into condition. As a comic actress she has improved since the days of "Little Christopher Columbus"; and the personal charm and

gay grace of movement, with the suggestion of suppressed wildness beneath them, are all there still, with more than their original bloom on them. But with every possible abuse of the indulgence of which Miss Yohe can always count on more than her fair share, it is impossible to say that she removes the impression that the day for opéra-bouffe has gone by. Opéra-bouffe is dramatically and musically too trivial for modern taste in opera; and in spectacle, variety, and novelty it cannot compete with the string of music-hall turns disguised as "musical comedy" now in vogue. Besides, even our modern music-hall songs and the orchestral "melodrame" which accompanies our acrobats are symphonic in construction and Wagnerian in breadth and richness compared to the couplets and quadrilles of Offenbach and Lecocq; although it is true, all the same, that Offenbach's score of "La Grande Duchesse" and its libretto are classics compared to anything we seem able to turn out nowadays. Still, if "La Grande Duchesse" had been entrusted to a mere comic-song tune compiler and a brace of facetious bar-loafers, it would have been none the more up to date now in dramatic weight and musical richness. Miss Yohe had better order a libretto from a witty dramatist and a score from a clever musician, both in touch with the humor of the day, and try her luck with that. She will only waste her time and money if she tries back to cast-off favorites.

By the way, this is musical criticism: why am I writing it? Why do they not send my colleague J. F. R. to these things? How stale it all seems! how hopeless! how heavily the stone of Sisyphus goes up along this track in the hot weather!

THE SECOND DATING OF SHERIDAN

The School for Scandal. By Sheridan. Lyceum Theatre, 20 June, 1896.

IT is impossible to see "The School for Scandal" without beginning to moralize. I am going to moralize: let the reader skip if he will.

As the world goes on, manners, customs, and morals change their aspect with revolutionary completeness, whilst man remains almost the same. Honor and decency, coats and shirts, cleanliness and politeness, eating and drinking, may persist as names; but the actual habits which the names denote alter so much that no century would tolerate those of its forerunner or successor. Compare the gentleman of Sheridan's time with the gentleman of to-day. What a change in all that is distinctively gentlemanly! — the dress, the hair, the watch-chain, the manners, the point of honor, the meals, the ablutions, and so on! Yet strip the twain, and they are as like as two eggs: maroon them on Juan Fernandez, and what difference will there be between their habits and those of Robinson Crusoe? Nevertheless, men do change, not only in what they think and what they do, but in what they are. Sometimes they change, just like their fashions, by the abolition of one sort and color of man and the substitution of another — white for black or yellow for red, white being the height of fashion with us. But they also change by slow development of the same kind of man; so that whilst the difference between the institutions of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries may be as

complete as the difference between a horse and a bicycle, the difference between the men of those periods is only a trifling increment of efficiency, not nearly so great as that which differentiated Shakespeare from the average Elizabethan. That is why Shakespeare's plays, though obsolete as representations of fashion and manners, are still far ahead of the public as dramatic studies of humanity.

But I must cut my argument more finely than this. To say that fashions change more rapidly than men is a very crude statement of extremes. Everything has its own rate of change. Fashions change more quickly than manners, manners more quickly than morals, morals more quickly than passions, and, in general, the conscious, reasonable, intellectual life more quickly than the instinctive, wilful, affectionate one. The dramatist who deals with the irony and humor of the relatively durable sides of life, or with their pity and terror, is the one whose comedies and tragedies will last longest — sometimes so long as to lead a book-struck generation to dub him "Immortal," and proclaim him as "not for an age, but for all time." Fashionable dramatists begin to "date," as the critics call it, in a few years: the accusation is rife at present against the earlier plays of Pinero and Grundy, though it is due to these gentlemen to observe that Shakespeare's plays must have "dated" far more when they were from twenty to a hundred years old than they have done since the world gave up expecting them to mirror the passing hour. When "Caste" and "Diplomacy" were fresh, "London Assurance" had begun to date most horribly: nowadays "Caste" and "Diplomacy" date like the day-before-yesterday's tinned salmon; whereas if "London Assurance" were revived (and I beg that

nothing of the kind be attempted), there would be no more question of dating about it than about the plays of Garrick or Tobin or Mrs. Centlivre.

But now observe the consequences, as to this dating business, of the fact that morals change more slowly than costumes and manners, and instincts and passions than morals. It follows, does it not, that every "immortal" play will run the following course? First, like "London Assurance," its manners and fashions will begin to date. If its matter is deep enough to tide it over this danger, it will come into repute again, like the comedies of Sheridan or Goldsmith, as a modern classic. But after some time — some centuries, perhaps — it will begin to date again in point of its ethical conception. Yet if it deals so powerfully with the instincts and passions of humanity as to survive this also, it will again regain its place, this time as an antique classic, especially if it tells a capital story. It is impossible now to read, without a curdling of the blood and a bristling of the hair, the frightful but dramatically most powerful speech which David, on his death-bed, delivers to his son about the old enemy whom he had himself sworn to spare. "Thou art a wise man and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." Odysseus, proud of outwitting all men at cheating and lying, and intensely relishing the blood of Penelope's suitors, is equally outside our morality. So is Punch. But David and Ulysses, like Punch and Judy, will survive for many a long day yet. Not until the change has reached our instincts and passions will their stories begin to "date" again for the last time before their final obsolescence.

I have been led into this investigation of "dating"

by the fact that "The School for Scandal," which has got over its first attack of that complaint so triumphantly that its obsolete costumes and manners positively heighten its attraction, dated very perceptibly last Saturday night at the Lyceum in point of morals. Its thesis of the superiority of the good-natured libertine to the ill-natured formalist and hypocrite may pass, though it is only a dramatization of "Tom Jones," and hardly demurs to the old morality further than to demonstrate that a bad man is not so bad as a worse. But there is an ancient and fishlike smell about the "villainy" of Joseph and the ladylikeness of Lady Teazle. If you want to bring "The School for Scandal" up to date, you must make Charles a woman, and Joseph a perfectly sincere moralist. Then you will be in the atmosphere of Ibsen and of "The Greatest of All These ——" at once. And it is because there is no sort of hint of this now familiar atmosphere — because Joseph's virtue is a pretence instead of a reality, and because the women in the play are set apart and regarded as absolutely outside the region of free judgment in which the men act, that the play, as aforesaid, "dates."

Formerly, nothing shocked us in the screen scene except Charles' caddishness in making fun of Sir Peter and his wife under very painful circumstances. But, after all, Charles was not so bad as Hamlet rallying Ophelia at the play or Mercutio chaffing the Nurse. What now jars on us is the caddishness of Lady Teazle, whose conduct for the first time begins to strike us as it would if it were the conduct of a man in the like circumstances. Society forbids a man to compromise a woman; but it also requires him, if he nevertheless does compromise her, to accept as one of the

consequences of his action the obligation not to betray her, even if he has to go into the witness-box and swear to her innocence. Suppose Lady Teazle, on being surprised by Sir Peter in Joseph's rooms, had invented a plausible excuse, and had asked Joseph to confirm her. Suppose Joseph had thereupon said, "No, it is false, every word. My slumbering conscience awakens; and I return to the sacred path of truth and duty. Your wife, Sir Peter, is an abandoned woman who came here to tempt me from the path of honor. But for your arrival I might have fallen; but now I see the blackness of her conduct in all its infamy; and I ask you to pardon me, and to accept the sincerity of my contrition as a pledge for my future good conduct." Would any extremity of blackballing, cutting, even kicking, be considered too severe for the man who should try to extricate himself at the expense of his accomplice in that straightforward manner? And yet that is exactly what Lady Teazle does without the least misgiving on the part of the dramatist as to the entire approval and sympathy of the audience. In this, as far as I am concerned, the dramatist is mistaken, and the play consequently dates. I cannot for the life of me see why it is less dishonorable for a woman to kiss and tell than a man. It is sometimes said that the social consequences of exposure are worse for a woman than for a man; but that is certainly not the case in these days of Parnell overthrows and ruinous damages, whatever it may have been in the time of Sheridan — and the commonplace assumptions with regard to that period are probably as erroneous as those current about our own. At all events, when a married woman comes to a man's rooms with the deliberate intention of enjoying a little gallantry, and,

on being caught, pleads for sympathy and forgiveness as an innocent young creature misled and seduced by a villain, she strikes a blow at the very foundations of immorality.

The fact that this is not altogether a wise thing to do — that artificial systems of morality, like other dangerous engines, explode when they are worked at high pressure without safety-valves — was cynically admitted in Sheridan's time with regard to men, and sentimentally repudiated with regard to women. But now see what has happened. A terrible, gifted person, a woman speaking for women, Madame Sarah Grand to wit, has arisen to insist that if the morality of her sex can do without safety-valves, so can the morality of "the stronger sex," and to demand that the man shall come to the woman exactly as moral as he insists that she shall come to him. And, of course, not a soul dares deny that claim. On the other hand, the fact that there is an obvious alternative way out of the difficulty does not escape those to whom Madame Sarah Grand's position is a *reductio ad absurdum* of our whole moral system; and accordingly we have Mrs. Kendal asking every night at the Garrick why Man — meaning Woman — should be so much more moral than God. As for me, it is not my business as a dramatic critic to pursue the controversy: it concerns me only as the explanation of how Lady Teazle's position is changed by the arrival of audiences who read edition after edition of "The Heavenly Twins," and who nightly applaud the point made by the author of "The Greatest of These ——." Whether they are for greater rigor with the novelist, or for greater charity with the dramatist, they are equally learning to drop the old fast-and-loose system of a masculine morality for the man

and a feminine morality for the woman, and to apply instead a human standard impartially to both sexes. And so "The School for Scandal" dates on the Woman Question almost as badly as "The Taming of the Shrew."

That the play is well acted goes without saying. Sheridan wrote for the actor as Handel wrote for the singer, setting him a combination of strokes which, however difficult some of them may be to execute finely, are familiar to all practised actors as the strokes which experience has shown to be proper to the nature and capacity of the stage-player as a dramatic instrument. With Sheridan you are never in the plight of the gentleman who stamped on a sheet of Beethoven's music in a rage, declaring that what cannot be played should not be written. That difficulty exists to-day with Ibsen, who abounds in passages that our actors do not know how to play; but "The School for Scandal" is like "Acis and Galatea": you may have the voice and the skill for it or you may not (probably not); but at all events you are never in doubt as to how it ought to be done. To see Mr. William Farren play Sir Peter after a long round of modern "character acting" is like hearing Santley sing "Nasce al bosco" after a seasonful of goat-bleating Spanish tenors and tremulous French baritones shattering themselves on passionately sentimental dithyrambs by Massenet and Saint-Saëns. Mr. Forbes Robertson is an excellent Joseph Surface. He gets at the centre of the part by catching its heartlessness and insincerity, from which his good looks acquire a subtle ghastliness, his grace a taint of artifice, and all the pictorial qualities which make him so admirable as a saint or mediæval hero an ironical play which has the most delicate hypocritical

effect. Mr. Fred Terry not only acts as Charles Surface, but acts well. I do not expect this statement to be believed in view of such prior achievements of his as "A Leader of Men," "The Home Secretary," and so forth; but I am bound to report what I saw. Mr. Terry has grown softer — fatter, if he will excuse the remark; and he has caught some of the ways of Miss Julia Neilson, the total result being to make his playing more effeminate than it used to be; but it cannot be denied that he plays Charles Surface with a vivacity and a pleasant adipose grace that has nothing of the stickishness of his modern Bond Street style about it. Mrs. Patrick Campbell struck me as being exactly right, for modern purposes, in her performance. In the fourth act she was Lady Teazle, and not an actress using the screen scene as a platform for a powerful but misplaced display of intense emotional acting. No doubt an actress — if she is able to do it — is greatly tempted to say to Joseph Surface "I think we had better leave honor out of the question" with all the dignity and depth of Imogen rebuking Iachimo, and to reveal herself, when the screen falls, as a woman of the richest nature tragically awakened for the first time to its full significance. In ten years' time we shall have Mrs. Campbell doing this as unscrupulously as Miss Rehan or any other past-mistress of her art does it now. But it is not the play: it upsets the balance of the comedy and belittles Sir Peter. Nothing deeper is wanted than commonplace thoughtlessness, good-nature, and a girl's revulsion of feeling at the end; and this Mrs. Patrick Campbell gives prettily and without exaggeration, with the result that the comedy is seen in its true proportions for the first time within the memory of this generation. It may be held, of course,

that the play has only been kept alive by overacting that particular scene; but this view is not borne out by a general comparison of the effect of the Daly and the Lyceum revivals. On Miss Rose Leclercq, Mr. Cyril Maude, and Mr. Edward Righton as Mrs. Candour, Sir Benjamin Backbite, and Sir Oliver, I need not waste compliments: their success was a foregone conclusion. Maria was hardly in Miss Brooke's line; but then Maria is not in anybody's line. Mr. Forbes Robertson's reception was extraordinarily enthusiastic. It is evident that the failure of "Magda" and the escapade of "Michael" have not shaken his popularity, whatever else it may have cost him. Towards Mrs. Campbell, however, there was a disposition to be comparatively sane and critical as well as very friendly. I attribute this, not to any improvement in the public brain, but to a make-up which, though cleverly in character with Lady Teazle, hid all the magnetic fascination of Paula Tanqueray and Fedora.

"THE SPACIOUS TIMES"

Doctor Faustus. By Christopher Marlowe. Acted by members of the Shakespeare Reading Society at St. George's Hall, on a stage after the model of the Fortune Playhouse, 2 July, 1896.

MR. WILLIAM POEL, in drawing up an announcement of the last exploit of the Elizabethan Stage Society, had no difficulty in citing a number of eminent authorities as to the superlative merits of Christopher Marlowe. The dotage of Charles Lamb on the subject of the Elizabethan dram-

atists has found many imitators, notably Mr. Swinburne, who expresses in verse what he finds in books as passionately as a poet expresses what he finds in life. Among them, it appears, is a Mr. G. B. Shaw, in quoting whom Mr. Poel was supposed by many persons to be quoting me. But though I share the gentleman's initials, I do not share his views. He can admire a fool: I cannot, even when his folly not only expresses itself in blank verse, but actually invents that art form for the purpose. I admit that Marlowe's blank verse has charm of color and movement; and I know only too well how its romantic march caught the literary imagination and founded that barren and horrible worship of blank verse for its own sake which has since desolated and laid waste the dramatic poetry of England. But the fellow was a fool for all that. He often reminds me, in his abysmally inferior way, of Rossini. Rossini had just the same trick of beginning with a magnificently impressive exordium, apparently pregnant with the most tragic developments, and presently lapsing into arrant triviality. But Rossini lapses amusingly; writes "Excusez du peu" at the double bar which separates the sublime from the ridiculous; and is gay, tuneful and clever in his frivolity. Marlowe, the moment the exhaustion of the imaginative fit deprives him of the power of raving, becomes childish in thought, vulgar and wooden in humor, and stupid in his attempts at invention. He is the true Elizabethan blank-verse beast, itching to frighten other people with the superstitious terrors and cruelties in which he does not himself believe, and wallowing in blood, violence, muscularity of expression and strenuous animal passion as only literary men do when they become thoroughly depraved by solitary work, seden-

tary cowardice, and starvation of the sympathetic centres. It is not surprising to learn that Marlowe was stabbed in a tavern brawl: what would be utterly unbelievable would be his having succeeded in stabbing any one else. On paper the whole obscene crew of these blank-verse rhetoricians could outdare Lucifer himself: Nature can produce no murderer cruel enough for Webster, nor any hero bully enough for Chapman, devout disciples, both of them, of Kit Marlowe. But you do not believe in their martial ardor as you believe in the valor of Sidney or Cervantes. One calls the Elizabethan dramatists imaginative, as one might say the same of a man in delirium tremens; but even that flatters them; for whereas the drinker can imagine rats and snakes and beetles which have some sort of resemblance to real ones, your typical Elizabethan heroes of the mighty line, having neither the eyes to see anything real nor the brains to observe it, could no more conceive a natural or convincing stage figure than a blind man can conceive a rainbow or a deaf one the sound of an orchestra. Such success as they have had is the success which any fluent braggart and liar may secure in a pothouse. Their swagger and fustian, and their scraps of Cicero and Aristotle, passed for poetry and learning in their own day because their public was Philistine and ignorant. To-day, without having by any means lost this advantage, they enjoy in addition the quaintness of their obsolescence, and, above all, the splendor of the light reflected on them from the reputation of Shakespeare. Without that light they would now be as invisible as they are insufferable. In condemning them indiscriminately, I am only doing what Time would have done if Shakespeare had not rescued them. I am quite aware that they did not get

their reputations for nothing; that there were degrees of badness among them; that Greene was really amusing, Marston spirited and silly-clever, Cyril Tourneur able to string together lines of which any couple picked out and quoted separately might pass as a fragment of a real organic poem, and so on. Even the brutish pedant Jonson was not heartless, and could turn out prettily affectionate verses and foolishly affectionate criticisms; whilst the plausible firm of Beaumont and Fletcher, humbugs as they were, could produce plays which were, all things considered, not worse than "The Lady of Lyons." But these distinctions are not worth making now. There is much variety in a dust-heap, even when the rag-picker is done with it; but we throw it indiscriminately into the "destructor" for all that. There is only one use left for the Elizabethan dramatists, and that is the purification of Shakespeare's reputation from its spurious elements. Just as you can cure people of talking patronizingly about "Mozartian melody" by showing them that the tunes they imagine to be his distinctive characteristic were the commonplaces of his time, so it is possible, perhaps, to cure people of admiring, as distinctively characteristic of Shakespeare, the false, forced rhetoric, the callous sensation-mongering in murder and lust, the ghosts and combats, and the venal expenditure of all the treasures of his genius on the bedizenment of plays which are, as wholes, stupid toys. When Sir Henry Irving presently revives "Cymbeline" at the Lyceum, the numerous descendants of the learned Shakespearean enthusiast who went down on his knees and kissed the Ireland forgeries will see no difference between the great dramatist who changed Imogen from a mere name in a story to a living woman, and the manager-showman

who exhibited her with the gory trunk of a newly beheaded man in her arms. But why should we, the heirs of so many greater ages, with the dramatic poems of Goethe and Ibsen in our hands, and the music of a great dynasty of musicians, from Bach to Wagner, in our ears — why should we waste our time on the rank and file of the Elizabethans, or encourage foolish modern persons to imitate them, or talk about Shakespeare as if his moral platitudes, his jingo claptraps, his tavern pleasantries, his bombast and drivel, and his incapacity for following up the scraps of philosophy he stole so aptly, were as admirable as the mastery of poetic speech, the feeling for nature, and the knack of character-drawing, fun, and heart wisdom which he was ready, like a true son of the theatre, to prostitute to any subject, any occasion, and any theatrical employment? The fact is, we are growing out of Shakespeare. Byron declined to put up with his reputation at the beginning of the nineteenth century; and now, at the beginning of the twentieth, he is nothing but a household pet. His characters still live; his word pictures of woodland and wayside still give us a Bank-holiday breath of country air; his verse still charms us; his sublimities still stir us; the commonplaces and trumperies of the wisdom which age and experience bring to all of us are still expressed by him better than by anybody else; but we have nothing to hope from him and nothing to learn from him — not even how to write plays, though he does that so much better than most modern dramatists. And if this is true of Shakespeare, what is to be said of Kit Marlowe?

Kit Marlowe, however, did not bore me at St. George's Hall as he has always bored me when I have tried to read him without skipping. The more I see of these

performances by the Elizabethan Stage Society, the more I am convinced that their method of presenting an Elizabethan play is not only the right method for that particular sort of play, but that any play performed on a platform amidst the audience gets closer home to its hearers than when it is presented as a picture framed by a proscenium. Also, that we are less conscious of the artificiality of the stage when a few well-understood conventions, adroitly handled, are substituted for attempts at an impossible scenic verisimilitude. All the old-fashioned tale-of-adventure plays, with their frequent changes of scene, and all the new problem plays, with their intense intimacies, should be done in this way.

The E. S. S. made very free with "Doctor Faustus." Their devils, Baliol and Belcher to wit, were not theatrical devils with huge pasteboard heads, but pictorial Temptation-of-St.-Anthony devils such as Martin Schongauer drew. The angels were Florentine fifteenth-century angels, with their draperies sewn into Botticellian folds and tucks. The Emperor's bodyguard had Maximilianesque uniforms copied from Holbein. Mephistophilis made his first appearance as Mr. Joseph Pennell's favorite devil from the roof of Notre Dame, and, when commanded to appear as a Franciscan friar, still proclaimed his modernity by wearing an electric bulb in his cowl. The Seven Deadly Sins were *tout ce qu'il y a de plus fin de siècle*, the five worst of them being so attractive that they got rounds of applause on the strength of their appearance alone. In short, Mr. William Poel gave us an artistic rather than a literal presentation of Elizabethan conditions, the result being, as always happens in such cases, that the picture of the past was really a picture of the future.

For which result he is, in my judgment, to be highly praised. The performance was a wonder of artistic discipline in this lawless age. It is true, since the performers were only three or four instead of fifty times as skilful as ordinary professional actors, that Mr. Poel has had to give up all impetuosity and spontaneity of execution, and to have the work done very slowly and carefully. But it is to be noted that even Marlowe, treated in this thorough way, is not tedious; whereas Shakespeare, rattled and rushed and spouted and clattered through in the ordinary professional manner, all but kills the audience with tedium. For instance, Mephistophilis was as joyless and leaden as a devil need be — it was clear that no stage-manager had ever exhorted him, like a lagging horse, to get the long speeches over as fast as possible, old chap — and yet he never for a moment bored us as Prince Hal and Poins bore us at the Haymarket. The actor who hurries reminds the spectators of the flight of time, which it is his business to make them forget. Twenty years ago the symphonies of Beethoven used to be rushed through in London with the sole object of shortening the agony of the audience. They were then highly unpopular. When Richter arrived he took the opposite point of view, playing them so as to prolong the delight of the audience; and Mottl dwells more lovingly on Wagner than Richter does on Beethoven. The result is that Beethoven and Wagner are now popular. Mr. Poel has proved that the same result will be attained as soon as blank-verse plays are produced under the control of managers who like them, instead of openly and shamelessly treating them as inflictions to be curtailed to the utmost. The representation at St. George's Hall went without a hitch from beginning

to end, a miracle of diligent preparedness. Mr. Mannering, as Faustus, had the longest and the hardest task; and he performed it conscientiously, punctually, and well. The others did no less with what they had to do. The relief of seeing actors come on the stage with the simplicity and abnegation of children, instead of bounding on to an enthusiastic reception with the "Here I am again" expression of the popular favorites of the ordinary stage, is hardly to be described. Our professional actors are now looked at by the public from behind the scenes; and they accept that situation and glory in it for the sake of the "personal popularity" it involves. What a gigantic reform Mr. Poel will make if his Elizabethan Stage should lead to such a novelty as a theatre to which people go to see the play instead of to see the cast!

DALY UNDAUNTED

The Countess Gucki: an entirely new comedy in three acts, adapted from the original of Franz von Schoenthan by Augustin Daly. Comedy Theatre, 11 July, 1896.
The Liar: a comedy in two acts, by Samuel Foote. Royalty Theatre, 9 July, 1896. (A Revival.)
The Honorable Member: a new three-act comedy drama by A. W. Gattie. Court Theatre, 14 July, 1896.

O MR. DALY! Unfortunate Mr. Daly! What a play! And we are actually assured that "The Countess Gucki" was received with delight in America! Well, perhaps it is true. After all, it may very well be that a nation plunged by its polit-

ical circumstances into the study of tracts on bimetallism may have found this "entirely new comedy" quite a page of romance after so many pages of the ratio between gold and silver. But in London, at the end of a season of undistracted gaiety, it is about as interesting as a second-hand ball dress of the last season but ten. When the curtain goes up, we are in Carlsbad in 1819, talking glibly about Goethe and Beethoven for the sake of local and temporal color. Two young lovers, who provide what one may call the melancholy relief to Miss Rehan, enter upon a maddeningly tedious exposition of the relationship and movements of a number of persons with long German titles. As none of these people have anything to do with the play as subsequently developed, the audience is perhaps expected to discover, when the curtain falls, that the exposition was a practical joke at their expense, and to go home laughing good-humoredly at their own discomfiture. But I was far too broken-spirited for any such merriment. These wretched lovers are supposed to be a dull, timid couple, too shy to come to the point; and as the luckless artists who impersonate them have no comic power, they present the pair with such conscientious seriousness that reality itself could produce nothing more insufferably tiresome. At last Miss Rehan appears, her entry being worked up with music — O Mr. Daly, Mr. Daly, when will you learn the time of day in London? — in a hideous Madame de Staël costume which emphasizes the fact that Miss Rehan, a woman in the prime of life with a splendid physique, is so careless of her bodily training that she looks as old as I do. She, too, talks about Goethe and Beethoven, and, having the merest chambermaid's part, proceeds heartlessly to exhibit a selection of strokes

and touches broken off from the old parts in which she has so often enchanted us. This rifling of the cherished trophies of her art to make a miserable bag of tricks for a part and a play which the meekest leading lady in London would rebel against, was to me downright sacrilege: I leave Miss Rehan to defend it if she can. The play, such as it is, begins with the entry of a gigantic coxcomb who lays siege to the ladies of the household in a manner meant by the dramatist to be engaging and interesting. In real life a barmaid would rebuke his intolerable gallantries: on the stage Miss Rehan is supposed to be fascinated by them. Later on comes the one feeble morsel of stale sentiment which saves the play from the summary damnation it deserves. An old General, the coxcomb's uncle, loved the Countess Gucki when she was sixteen. They meet again: the General still cherishes his old romance: the lady is touched by his devotion. The dramatist thrusts this ready-made piece of pathos in your face as artlessly as a village boy thrusts a turnip-headed bogie; but like the bogie, it has its effect on simple folk; and Miss Rehan, with callous cleverness, turns on one of her best "Twelfth Night" effects, and arrests the sentimental moment with a power which, wasted on such trivial stuff, is positively cynical and shocking. But this oasis is soon left behind. The old General, not having a line that is worth speaking, looks solemn and kisses Miss Rehan's hand five or six times every minute; the coxcomb suddenly takes the part of circus clown, and, in pretended transports of jealousy, thrusts a map between the pair, and shifts it up and down whilst they dodge him by trying to see one another over or under it. But, well as we by this time know Mr. Daly's idea of high comedy, I doubt if I

shall be believed if I describe the play too closely. The whole affair, as a comedy presented at a West End house to a London audience by a manager "starring" a first-rate actress, ought to be incredible — ought to indicate that the manager is in his second childhood. But I suppose it only indicates that audiences are in their first childhood. If it pays, I have no more to say.

Mr. Lewis and Mrs. Gilbert, like Miss Rehan, are still faithful to Mr. Daly, in spite of his wasting their talent on trash utterly unworthy of them. Remonstrance, I suppose, is useless. At best it could only drive Mr. Daly into another of his fricassees of Shakespeare.

Mr. Bourchier's revival of "The Liar" produced an effect out of all proportion to the merits of the play by the contrast between Foote's clever dialogue and the witlessness of our contemporary drama. The part of Young Wilding gives no trouble to a comedian of Mr. Bourchier's address; and Mr. Hendrie as Old Wilding was equal to the occasion; but the rest clowned in the most graceless amateur fashion. The very commonplaces of deportment are vanishing from the stage. The women cannot even make a curtsey: they sit down on their heels with a flop and a smirk, and think that that is what Mr. Turveydrop taught their grandmothers. Even Miss Irene Vanbrugh is far too offhand and easily self-satisfied. Actors, it seems to me, will not be persuaded nowadays to begin at the right end of their profession. Instead of acquiring the cultivated speech, gesture, movement, and personality which distinguish acting as a fine art from acting in the ordinary sense in which everybody acts, they dismiss it as a mere word which signifies to be, to do, or

to suffer, like Lindley Murray's verb, and proceed to inflame their imaginations with romantic literature and green-room journalism until such time as their great opportunity will come. Off the stage, be it observed, people are now better trained physically than they ever were before, and therefore more impatient of exhibitions of ugliness and clumsiness. Any good dancing-master could take half a dozen ordinary active young ladies and gentlemen, and in four lessons make them go through the whole stage business of "The Liar" much more handsomely than the Royalty company. It is a great pity that all actors and actresses are not presented at Court: it would force them, for once in their lives at least, to study the pageantry of their profession, instead of idly nursing their ambitions, and dreaming of "conceptions" which they could not execute if they were put to the proof.

"The Honorable Member," produced at a matinée at the Court last Tuesday, is a remarkable play; not because the author, Mr. Gattie, is either a great dramatic poet or even, so far, a finished playwright; but because he seems conversant with ethical, social, and political ideas which have been fermenting for the last fifteen years in England and America, and which have considerably modified the assumptions upon which writers of penny novelettes and fashionable dramas depend for popular sympathy. The social judgments pronounced in the play are unmistakably those of reaction against unsocial commercialism and political party service, with here and there a touch of the cultured variety of anarchism. The hero is openly impatient of the scruples the heroine makes about going to live with him, she being unfortunately married to a felon. "You say it is wrong," he says: "what you

mean is that some person in a horsehair wig will show that it is against the law." When some one takes a high moral tone against betting, he uses up the point made in Mr. Wordsworth Donisthorpe's essays, that a life insurance is a pure bet made by the insurance company with the person insured. A dramatist who has read Mr. Donisthorpe comes as a refreshing surprise in a theatrical generation which pouts at Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's plays because their ideas are as modern as those of Pusey and Maurice, Ruskin and Dickens. I suggest, however, to Mr. Gattie that people's ideas, however useful they may be for embroidery, especially in passages of comedy, are not the true stuff of drama, which is always the naïve feeling underlying the ideas. As one who has had somewhat exceptional opportunities of observing the world in which these new ideas are current, I can testify that they afford no clue to the individual character of the person holding them. A Socialist view of industrial questions, and an Individualist view of certain moral questions, may strongly differentiate the rising public man of to-day from the rising public man of twenty-five years ago, but not one rising public man of to-day from another rising public man of to-day. I know a dozen men who talk and think just as Mr. Gattie's editor-hero talks and thinks; but they differ from one another as widely as Pistol differs from Hamlet. The same thing is true of the Liberal-Capitalist persons who talk and think just the other way: they differ as widely as Mr. Gladstone differs from Mr. Jabez Balfour. I quite see that since we shall always have a dozen dramatists who can handle conventions for every one who can handle character, we are coming fast to a melodramatic formula in which the villain

shall be a bad employer and the hero a Socialist; but that formula is no truer to life than the old one in which the villain was a lawyer and the hero a Jack Tar. It is less than four years since the Independent Theatre, then in desperate straits for a play of native growth, extracted from my dust-heap of forgotten MSS. a play called "Widowers' Houses," in which I brought on the stage the slum landlord and domineering employer who is, in private life, a scrupulously respectable gentleman. Also his bullied, sweated rent-collector. Take "Widowers' Houses"; cut out the passages which convict the audience of being just as responsible for the slums as the landlord is; make the hero a ranting Socialist instead of a perfectly commonplace young gentleman; make the heroine an angel instead of her father's daughter only one generation removed from the wash-tub; and you have the successful melodrama of to-morrow. Mr. Gattie, who probably never saw my play, has taken a long step in this direction. His Samuel Ditherby, M.P., bullying the rent-wretched clerk, Beamer, is my Sartorius bullying the collector Lickcheese; and the relationship is emphasized by the fact that just as my play was rescued from the fury of an outraged public by Mr. James Welch's creation of Lickcheese, "The Honorable Member" was helped through an intolerably hot July afternoon by the same actor's impersonation of Beamer. Unfortunately for Mr. Welch, the third act of "Widowers' Houses" presented Lickcheese in a comic aspect, and so left an impression that Mr. Welch had made his great hit in a comic part. But, though Mr. Welch has a considerable power of being funny, he has done no purely comic part that half a dozen other comedians could not do as well or better; whereas his power of

pathos in realism — a power which is sufficient to awaken the sympathy and hush the attention of the whole house before he utters a word — distinguishes him from every other actor in his line on our stage; entitles him, indeed, to rank as an actor of genius. His Petkoff in "Arms and the Man," and his postboy in "Rosemary," are all very well; but what difficulty would there be in replacing him in either part? But his first entry and scene as Lickcheese, his curate in "Alan's Wife," and this new part of Beamer — all pathetic work — which of our actors could touch them after him? Beamer is technically even a greater triumph than Lickcheese, because — though I say it who should not — the author has been less considerate to the actor. Mr. Welch's exit in dead silence in the first act of "Widowers' Houses" brought down the house; but it was bound to do so if only (a large "if," I admit) the actor had driven home the preceding scene up to the hilt. But Beamer has to turn at the door and deliver what I take to be one of the most dangerous exit speeches ever penned, being nothing less than "Curse you! Curse you! Damn you to hell!" That speech is one of the author's mistakes; but Mr. Welch pulled it through so successfully that his exit was again the hit of the piece. Surely it cannot take our managers more than another twenty years — or, say, twenty-five — to realize that the parts for Mr. Welch are strong and real pathetic parts instead of silly clowning ones.

Here, then, we have the popular elements in Sartorius and Lickcheese, with an angel heroine of the unjustly accused variety, and a hero who, if not aggressively a Socialist, is a high-toned young man of the American ethical sort, ready to try the same experiment of living

down prejudice that George Henry Lewes tried with George Eliot. The plot is very old and simple — "La Gazza Ladra" over again, except that it is Beamer instead of a magpie who brings the heroine under suspicion of stealing the family diamonds. The audience swallowed all the heterodox sentiments as if they were the platitudes of an archbishop. The play might be lightened and smartened considerably by the excision of a number of bits and scraps which, good enough for conversation, are not good enough for drama. Miss Madge McIntosh played the heroine so naturally that she was neither more nor less interesting than if the play had been real. This is more than I could say for all actresses; but I do not mean it as a compliment for all that. Unless an actress can be at least ten times as interesting as a real lady, why should she leave the drawing-room and go on the stage? Mr. Graham Brown's impersonation of the plain-clothes policeman was a clever bit of mimicry. The other parts were in familiar hands — those of Mr. Anson, Mrs. Edmund Phelps, Mr. Bernage, and Mr. Scott Buist.

BLAMING THE BARD

Cymbeline. By Shakespeare. Lyceum Theatre, 22 September, 1896.

I CONFESS to a difficulty in feeling civilized just at present. Flying from the country, where the gentlemen of England are in an ecstasy of chicken-butchering, I return to town to find the higher wits assembled at a play three hundred years old, in which

the sensation scene exhibits a woman waking up to find her husband reposing gorily in her arms with his head cut off.

Pray understand, therefore, that I do not defend "Cymbeline." It is for the most part stagey trash of the lowest melodramatic order, in parts abominably written, throughout intellectually vulgar, and, judged in point of thought by modern intellectual standards, vulgar, foolish, offensive, indecent, and exasperating beyond all tolerance. There are moments when one asks despairingly why our stage should ever have been cursed with this "immortal" pilferer of other men's stories and ideas, with his monstrous rhetorical fustian, his unbearable platitudes, his pretentious reduction of the subtlest problems of life to commonplaces against which a Polytechnic debating club would revolt, his incredible unsuggestiveness, his sententious combination of ready reflection with complete intellectual sterility, and his consequent incapacity for getting out of the depth of even the most ignorant audience, except when he solemnly says something so transcendently platitudinous that his more humble-minded hearers cannot bring themselves to believe that so great a man really meant to talk like their grandmothers. With the single exception of Homer, there is no eminent writer, not even Sir Walter Scott, whom I can despise so entirely as I despise Shakespeare when I measure my mind against his. The intensity of my impatience with him occasionally reaches such a pitch, that it would positively be a relief to me to dig him up and throw stones at him, knowing as I do how incapable he and his worshippers are of understanding any less obvious form of indignity. To read "Cymbeline" and to think of Goethe, of Wagner, of Ibsen, is, for me, to

imperil the habit of studied moderation of statement which years of public responsibilty as a journalist have made almost second nature in me.

But I am bound to add that I pity the man who cannot enjoy Shakespeare. He has outlasted thousands of abler thinkers, and will outlast a thousand more. His gift of telling a story (provided some one else told it to him first); his enormous power over language, as conspicuous in his senseless and silly abuse of it as in his miracles of expression; his humor; his sense of idiosyncratic character; and his prodigious fund of that vital energy which is, it seems, the true differentiating property behind the faculties, good, bad, or indifferent, of the man of genius, enable him to entertain us so effectively that the imaginary scenes and people he has created become more real to us than our actual life — at least, until our knowledge and grip of actual life begins to deepen and glow beyond the common. When I was twenty I knew everybody in Shakespeare, from Hamlet to Abhorson, much more intimately than I knew my living contemporaries; and to this day, if the name of Pistol or Polonius catches my eye in a newspaper, I turn to the passage with more curiosity than if the name were that of — but perhaps I had better not mention any one in particular.

How many new acquaintances, then, do you make in reading "Cymbeline," provided you have the patience to break your way into it through all the fustian, and are old enough to be free from the modern idea that Cymbeline must be the name of a cosmetic and Imogen of the latest scientific discovery in the nature of a hitherto unknown gas? Cymbeline is nothing; his queen nothing, though some attempt is made to justify her description as "a woman that bears all down with her brain";

Posthumus, nothing — most fortunately, as otherwise he would be an unendurably contemptible hound; Belarius, nothing — at least, not after Kent in "King Lear" (just as the Queen is nothing after Lady Macbeth); Iachimo, not much — only a *diabolus ex machinâ* made plausible; and Pisanio, less than Iachimo. On the other hand, we have Cloten, the prince of numbskulls, whose part, indecencies and all, is a literary masterpiece from the first line to the last; the two princes — fine presentments of that impressive and generous myth, the noble savage; Caius Lucius, the Roman general, urbane among the barbarians; and, above all, Imogen. But do, please, remember that there are two Imogens. One is a solemn and elaborate example of what, in Shakespeare's opinion, a real lady ought to be. With this unspeakable person virtuous indignation is chronic. Her object in life is to vindicate her own propriety and to suspect everybody else's, especially her husband's. Like Lothaw in the jeweller's shop in Bret Harte's burlesque novel, she cannot be left alone with unconsidered trifles of portable silver without officiously assuring the proprietors that she has stolen naught, nor would not, though she had found gold strewed i' the floor. Her fertility and spontaneity in nasty ideas is not to be described: there is hardly a speech in her part that you can read without wincing. But this Imogen has another one tied to her with ropes of blank verse (which can fortunately be cut) — the Imogen of Shakespeare's genius, an enchanting person of the most delicate sensitiveness, full of sudden transitions from ecstasies of tenderness to transports of childish rage, and reckless of consequences in both, instantly hurt and instantly appeased, and of the highest breeding and courage. But for this Imogen,

" Cymbeline " would stand about as much chance of being revived now as " Titus Andronicus."

The instinctive Imogen, like the real live part of the rest of the play, has to be disentangled from a mass of stuff which, though it might be recited with effect and appropriateness by young amateurs at a performance by the Elizabethan Stage Society, is absolutely unactable and unutterable in the modern theatre, where a direct illusion of reality is aimed at, and where the repugnance of the best actors to play false passages is practically insuperable. For the purposes of the Lyceum, therefore, " Cymbeline " had to be cut, and cut liberally. Not that there was any reason to apprehend that the manager would flinch from the operation: quite the contrary. In a true republic of art Sir Henry Irving would ere this have expiated his acting versions on the scaffold. He does not merely cut plays: he disembowels them. In " Cymbeline " he has quite surpassed himself by extirpating the antiphonal third verse of the famous dirge. A man who would do that would do anything — cut the coda out of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or shorten one of Velasquez's Philips into a kitcat to make it fit over his drawing-room mantelpiece. The grotesque character tracery of Cloten's lines, which is surely not beyond the appreciation of an age educated by Stevenson, is defaced with Cromwellian ruthlessness; and the patriotic scene, with the Queen's great speech about the natural bravery of our isle, magnificent in its Walkürenritt swing, is shorn away, though it might easily have been introduced in the Garden scene. And yet, long screeds of rubbish about " slander, whose edge is sharper than the sword," and so on, are preserved with superstitious veneration.

This curious want of connoisseurship in literature would disable Sir Henry Irving seriously if he were an interpretative actor. But it is, happily, the fault of a great quality — the creative quality. A prodigious deal of nonsense has been written about Sir Henry Irving's conception of this, that, and the other Shakespearean character. The truth is that he has never in his life conceived or interpreted the characters of any author except himself. He is really as incapable of acting another man's play as Wagner was of setting another man's libretto; and he should, like Wagner, have written his plays for himself. But as he did not find himself out until it was too late for him to learn that supplementary trade, he was compelled to use other men's plays as the framework for his own creations. His first great success in this sort of adaptation was with the "Merchant of Venice." There was no question then of a bad Shylock or a good Shylock: he was simply not Shylock at all; and when his own creation came into conflict with Shakespeare's, as it did quite openly in the Trial scene, he simply played in flat contradiction of the lines, and positively acted Shakespeare off the stage. This was an original policy, and an intensely interesting one from the critical point of view; but it was obvious that its difficulty must increase with the vividness and force of the dramatist's creation. Shakespeare at his highest pitch cannot be set aside by any mortal actor, however gifted; and when Sir Henry Irving tried to interpolate a most singular and fantastic notion of an old man between the lines of a fearfully mutilated acting version of "King Lear," he was smashed. On the other hand, in plays by persons of no importance, where the dramatist's part of the business is the merest trash, his

creative activity is unhampered and uncontradicted; and the author's futility is the opportunity for the actor's masterpiece. Now I have already described Shakespeare's Iachimo as little better than any of the lay figures in "Cymbeline" — a mere *diabolus ex machinâ*. But Irving's Iachimo is a very different affair. It is a new and independent creation. I knew Shakespeare's play inside and out before last Tuesday; but this Iachimo was quite fresh and novel to me. I witnessed it with unqualified delight: it was no vulgar bagful of "points," but a true impersonation, unbroken in its life-current from end to end, varied on the surface with the finest comedy, and without a single lapse in the sustained beauty of its execution. It is only after such work that an artist can with perfect naturalness and dignity address himself to his audience as "their faithful and loving servant"; and I wish I could add that the audience had an equal right to offer him their applause as a worthy acknowledgment of his merit. But when a house distributes its officious first-night plaudits impartially between the fine artist and the blunderer who roars a few lines violently and rushes off the stage after compressing the entire art of How Not to Act into five intolerable minutes, it had better be told to reserve its impertinent and obstreperous demonstrations until it has learnt to bestow them with some sort of discrimination. Our first-night people mean well, and will, no doubt, accept my assurance that they are donkeys with all possible good humor; but they should remember that to applaud for the sake of applauding, as schoolboys will cheer for the sake of cheering, is to destroy our own power of complimenting those who, as the greatest among us, are the servants of all the rest.

Over the performances of the other gentlemen in the cast let me skate as lightly as possible. Mr. Norman Forbes's Cloten, though a fatuous idiot rather than the brawny "beefwitted" fool whom Shakespeare took from his own Ajax in "Troilus and Cressida," is effective and amusing, so that one feels acutely the mangling of his part, especially the cutting of that immortal musical criticism of his upon the serenade. Mr. Gordon Craig and Mr. Webster are desperate failures as the two noble savages. They are as spirited and picturesque as possible; but every pose, every flirt of their elfin locks, proclaims the wild freeedom of Bedford Park. They recite the poor maimed dirge admirably, Mr. Craig being the more musical of the twain; and Mr. Webster's sword-and-cudgel fight with Cloten is very lively; but their utter deficiency in the grave, rather sombre, uncivilized primeval strength and Mohican dignity so finely suggested by Shakespeare, takes all the ballast out of the fourth act, and combines with the inappropriate prettiness and sunniness of the landscape scenery to most cruelly handicap Miss Ellen Terry in the crucial scene of her awakening by the side of the flower-decked corpse — a scene which, without every accessory to heighten its mystery, terror, and pathos, is utterly and heartbreakingly impossible for any actress, even if she were Duse, Ristori, Mrs. Siddons, and Miss Terry rolled into one. When I saw this gross and palpable oversight, and heard people talking about the Lyceum stage management as superb, I with difficulty restrained myself from tearing out my hair in handfuls and scattering it with imprecations to the four winds. That cave of the three mountaineers wants nothing but a trellised porch, a bamboo bicycle, and

a nice little bed of standard roses, to complete its absurdity.

With Mr. Frederic Robinson as Belarius, and Mr. Tyars as Pisanio, there is no reasonable fault to find, except that they might, perhaps, be a little brighter with advantage; and of the rest of their male colleagues I think I shall ask to be allowed to say nothing at all, even at the cost of omitting a tribute to Mr. Fuller Mellish's discreet impersonation of the harmless necessary Philario. There remains Miss Geneviève Ward, whose part, with the "Neptune's park" speech lopped off, was not worth her playing, and Miss Ellen Terry, who invariably fascinates me so much that I have not the smallest confidence in my own judgment respecting her. There was no Bedford Park about the effect she made as she stepped into the King's Garden; still less any of the atmosphere of ancient Britain. At the first glance, we were in the Italian fifteenth century; and the house, unversed in the cinquecento, but dazzled all the same, proceeded to roar until it stopped from exhaustion. There is one scene in "Cymbeline," the one in which Imogen receives the summons to "that same blessed Milford," which might have been written for Miss Terry, so perfectly does its innocent rapture and frank gladness fit into her hand. Her repulse of Iachimo brought down the house as a matter of course, though I am convinced that the older Shakespeareans present had a vague impression that it could not be properly done except by a stout, turnip-headed matron, with her black hair folded smoothly over her ears and secured in a classic bun. Miss Terry had evidently cut her own part; at all events the odious Mrs. Grundyish Imogen had been dissected out of it so skilfully that it went without a single jar. The

circumstances under which she was asked to play the fourth act were, as I have explained, impossible. To wake up in the gloom amid the wolf and robber-haunted mountain gorges which formed the Welsh mountains of Shakespeare's imagination in the days before the Great Western existed is one thing: to wake up at about three on a nice Bank-holiday afternoon in a charming spot near the valley of the Wye is quite another. With all her force, Miss Terry gave us faithfully the whole process which Shakespeare has presented with such dramatic cunning — Imogen's bewilderment, between dream and waking, as to where she is; the vague discerning of some strange bedfellow there; the wondering examination of the flowers with which he is so oddly covered; the frightful discovery of blood on the flowers, with the hideous climax that the man is headless and that his clothes are her husband's; and it was all ruined by that blazing, idiotic, prosaic sunlight in which everything leapt to the eye at once, rendering the mystery and the slowly growing clearness of perception incredible and unintelligible, and spoiling a scene which, properly stage-managed, would have been a triumph of histrionic intelligence. Cannot somebody be hanged for this? — men perish every week for lesser crimes. What consolation is it to me that Miss Terry, playing with infinite charm and delicacy of appeal, made up her lost ground in other directions, and had more than as much success as the roaring gallery could feel the want of?

MORRIS AS ACTOR AND DRAMATIST

10 October, 1896.

AMONG the many articles which have been written about William Morris during the past week, I have seen none which deal with him as dramatist and actor. Yet I have been present at a play by William Morris; and I have seen him act, and act, too, much better than an average professional of the twenty-pound a week class. I need therefore make no apology for making him the subject of an article on the theatre.

Morris was a quite unaffected and accessible person. All and sundry were welcome to know him to the full extent of their capacity for such acquaintance (which was usually not saying much) as far as a busy and sensitive man could make himself common property without intolerable boredom and waste of time. Even to the Press, which was generally — bless its innocence! — either ignorantly insolent to him or fatuously patronizing, as if he were some delightful curio, appreciable only by persons of taste and fancy, he was willing to be helpful. Journalist though I am, he put up with me with the friendliest patience, though I am afraid I must sometimes have been a fearful trial to him.

I need hardly say that I have often talked copiously to him on many of his favorite subjects, especially the artistic subjects. What is more to the point, he has occasionally talked to me about them. No art was indifferent to him. He declared that nobody could pass a picture without looking at it — that even a

smoky cracked old mezzotint in a pawnbroker's window would stop you for at least a moment. Some idiot, I notice, takes it on himself to assure the world that he had no musical sense. As a matter of fact, he had a perfect ear, a most musical singing voice, and so fine a sense of beauty in sound (as in everything else) that he could not endure the clatter of the pianoforte or the squalling and shouting of the average singer. When I told him that the Amsterdam choir, brought over here by M. de Lange, had discovered the secret of the beauty of mediæval music, and sang it with surpassing excellence, he was full of regret for having missed it; and the viol concerts of M. Dolmetsch pleased him greatly. Indeed once, during his illness, when M. Dolmetsch played him some really beautiful music on a really beautiful instrument, he was quite overcome by it. I once urged him to revive the manufacture of musical instruments and rescue us from the vulgar handsomeness of the trade articles with which our orchestras are equipped; and he was by no means averse to the idea, having always, he avowed, thought he should like to make a good fiddle. Only neither in music nor in anything else could you engage him in any sort of intellectual dilettantism: he would not waste his time and energy on the curiosities and fashions of art, but went straight to its highest point in the direct and simple production of beauty. He was ultra-modern — not merely up to date, but far ahead of it: his wall papers, his hangings, his tapestries, and his printed books have the twentieth century in every touch of them; whilst as to his prose word-weaving, our worn-out nineteenth-century Macaulayese is rancid by comparison. He started from the thirteenth century simply because he wished to start from the most ad-

vanced point instead of from the most backward one — say 1850 or thereabout. When people called him "archaic," he explained, with the indulgence of perfect knowledge, that they were fools, only they did not know it. In short, the man was a complete artist, who became great by a pre-eminent sense of beauty, and practical ability enough (and to spare) to give effect to it.

And yet — and yet — and yet — ! I am sorry to have to say it; but I never could induce him to take the smallest interest in the contemporary theatrical routine of the Strand. As far as I am aware, I share with Mr. Henry Arthur Jones the distinction of being the only modern dramatist whose plays were witnessed by him (except "Charley's Aunt," which bored him); and I greatly fear that neither of us dare claim his visits as a spontaneous act of homage to modern acting and the modern drama. Now, when Morris would not take an interest in anything, and would not talk about it — and his capacity for this sort of resistance, both passive and active, was remarkably obstinate — it generally meant that he had made up his mind, on good grounds, that it was not worth talking about. A man's mouth may be shut and his mind closed much more effectually by his knowing all about a subject than by his knowing nothing about it; and whenever Morris suddenly developed a downright mulishness about anything, it was a sure sign that he knew it through and through and had quarrelled with it. Thus, when an enthusiast for some fashionable movement or reaction in art would force it into the conversation, he would often behave so as to convey an impression of invincible prejudice and intolerant ignorance, and so get rid of it. But later on he would let slip some-

thing that showed, in a flash, that he had taken in the whole movement at its very first demonstration, and had neither prejudices nor illusions about it. When you knew the subject yourself, and could see beyond it and around it, putting it in its proper place and accepting its limits, he would talk fast enough about it; but it did not amuse him to allow novices to break a lance with him, because he had no special facility for brilliant critical demonstration, and required too much patience for his work to waste any of it on idle discussions. Consequently there was a certain intellectual roguery about him of which his intimate friends were very well aware; so that if a subject was thrust on him, the aggressor was sure to be ridiculously taken in if he did not calculate on Morris's knowing much more about it than he pretended to.

On the subject of the theatre, an enthusiastic young first-nighter would probably have given Morris up, after the first attempt to gather his opinion of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," as an ordinary citizen who had never formed the habit of playgoing, and neither knew nor cared anything about the theatre except as a treat for children once a year during the pantomime season. But Morris would have written for the stage if there had been any stage that a poet and artist could write for. When the Socialist League once proposed to raise the wind by a dramatic entertainment, and suggested that he should provide the play, he set to at once and provided it. And what kind of play was it? Was it a miracle play on the lines of those scenes in the Towneley mysteries between the "shepherds abiding in the field," which he used to quote with great relish as his idea of a good bit of comedy? Not at all: it was a topical extravaganza, entitled "Nupkins

Awakened," the chief "character parts" being Sir Peter Edlin, Tennyson, and an imaginary Archbishop of Canterbury. Sir Peter owed the compliment to his activity at that time in sending Socialists to prison on charges of "obstruction," which was always proved by getting a policeman to swear that if any passer-by or vehicle had wished to pass over the particular spot in a thoroughfare on which the speaker or his audience happened to be standing, their presence would have obstructed him. This contention, which was regarded as quite sensible and unanswerable by the newspapers of the day, was put into a nutshell in the course of Sir Peter's summing-up in the play. "In fact, gentlemen, it is a matter of grave doubt whether we are not all of us continually committing this offence from our cradles to our graves." This speech, which the real Sir Peter of course never made, though he certainly would have done so had he had wit enough to see the absurdity of solemnly sending a man to prison for two months because another man could not walk through him — especially when it would have been so easy to lock him up for three on some respectable pretext — will probably keep Sir Peter's memory green when all his actual judicial utterances are forgotten. As to Tennyson, Morris took a Socialist who happened to combine the right sort of beard with a melancholy temperament, and drilled him in a certain portentous incivility of speech which, taken with the quality of his remarks, threw a light on Morris's opinion of Tennyson which was all the more instructive because he delighted in Tennyson's verse as keenly as Wagner delighted in the music of Mendelssohn, whose credit for qualities of larger scope he, nevertheless, wrote down and destroyed. Morris played the ideal

Archbishop himself. He made no attempt to make up the part in the ordinary stage fashion. He always contended that no more was necessary for stage illusion than some distinct conventional symbol, such as a halo for a saint, a crook for a bishop, or, if you liked, a cloak and dagger for the villain, and a red wig for the comedian. A pair of clerical bands and black stockings proclaimed the archbishop: the rest he did by obliterating his humor and intelligence, and presenting his own person to the audience like a lantern with the light blown out, with a dull absorption in his own dignity which several minutes of the wildest screaming laughter at him when he entered could not disturb. I laughed immoderately myself; and I can still see quite clearly the long top floor of that warehouse in the Farringdon Road as I saw it in glimpses between my paroxysms, with Morris gravely on the stage in his bands at one end; Mrs. Stillman, a tall and beautiful figure, rising like a delicate spire above a skyline of city chimney-pots at the other; and a motley sea of rolling, wallowing, guffawing Socialists between. There has been no other such successful first night within living memory, I believe; but I only remember one dramatic critic who took care to be present — Mr. William Archer. Morris was so interested by his experiment in this sort of composition that he for some time talked of trying his hand at a serious drama, and would no doubt have done it had there been any practical occasion for it, or any means of consummating it by stage representation under proper conditions without spending more time on the job than it was worth. Later, at one of the annual festivities of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, he played the old gentleman in the bath-chair in a short piece called "The Duchess

of Bayswater" (*not* by himself), which once served its turn at the Haymarket as a curtain raiser. It was impossible for such a born teller and devourer of stories as he was to be indifferent to an art which is nothing more than the most vivid and real of all ways of story-telling. No man would more willingly have seen his figures move and heard their voices than he.

Why, then, did he so seldom go to the theatre? Well, come, gentle reader, why does n't anybody go to the theatre? Do you suppose that even I would go to the theatre twice a year except on business? You would never dream of asking why Morris did not read penny novelettes, or hang his rooms with Christmas-number chromolithographs. We have no theatre for men like Morris: indeed, we have no theatre for quite ordinary cultivated people. I am a person of fairly catholic interests: it is my privilege to enjoy the acquaintance of a few representative people in various vortices of culture. I know some of the most active-minded and intelligent of the workers in social and political reform. They read stories with an avidity that amazes me; but they don't go to the theatre. I know the people who are struggling for the regeneration of the arts and crafts. They don't go to the theatre. I know people who amuse their leisure with edition after edition of the novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward, Madame Sarah Grand, and Mr. Harold Frederic, and who could not for their lives struggle through two chapters of Miss Corelli, Mr. Rider Haggard, or Mr. Hall Caine. They don't go to the theatre. I know the lovers of music who support the Richter and Mottl concerts and go to Bayreuth if they can afford it. They don't go to the theatre. I know the staff of this paper. It does n't go to the theatre — even the musi-

cal critic is an incorrigible shirk when his duties involve a visit thither. Nobody goes to the theatre except the people who also go to Madame Tussaud's. Nobody writes for it, unless he is hopelessly stage struck and cannot help himself. It has no share in the leadership of thought: it does not even reflect its current. It does not create beauty: it apes fashion. It does not produce personal skill: our actors and actresses, with the exception of a few persons with natural gifts and graces, mostly miscultivated or half cultivated, are simply the middle-class section of the residuum. The curt insult with which Matthew Arnold dismissed it from consideration found it and left it utterly defenceless. And yet you ask me why Morris did not go to the theatre. In the name of common sense, why should he have gone?

When I say these things to stupid people, they have a feeble way of retorting, "What about the Lyceum?" That is just the question I have been asking for years; and the reply always is that the Lyceum is occupied exclusively with the works of a sixteenth-seventeenth century author, in whose social views no educated and capable person to-day has the faintest interest, and whose art is partly so villainously artificial and foolish as to produce no effect on a thirteenth-twentieth century artist like Morris except one of impatience and discomfort, and partly so fine as to defy satisfactory treatment at a theatre where there are only two competent performers, who are neither of them in their proper element in the seventeenth century. Morris was willing to go to a street corner and tell the people something that they very badly needed to be told, even when he could depend on being arrested by a policeman for his trouble; but he drew the line at fashionably

modernized Shakespeare. If you had told him what a pretty fifteenth-century picture Miss Terry makes in her flower wreath in Cymbeline's garden, you might have induced him to peep for a moment at that; but the first blast of the queen's rhetoric would have sent him flying into the fresh air again. You could not persuade Morris that he was being amused when he was, as a matter of fact, being bored; and you could not persuade him that music was harmonious by playing it on vulgar instruments, or that verse was verse when uttered by people with either no delivery at all or the delivery of an auctioneer or toastmaster. In short, you could not induce him to accept ugliness as art, no matter how brilliant, how fashionable, how sentimental, or how intellectually interesting you might make it. And you certainly could not palm off a mess of Tappertitian sentiment daubed over some sham love affair on him as a good story. This, alas! is as much as to say that you could not induce him to spend his evenings at a modern theatre. And yet he was not in the least an Impossibilist: he revelled in Dickens and the elder Dumas; he was enthusiastic about the acting of Robson, and greatly admired Jefferson; if he had started a Kelmscott Theatre instead of the Kelmscott Press, I am quite confident that in a few months, without going half a mile afield for his company, he would have produced work that would within ten years have affected every theatre in Europe, from London to St. Petersburg, and from New York to Alexandria. At all events, I should be glad to hear any gentleman point out an instance in which he undertook to find the way, and did not make us come along with him. We kicked and screamed, it is true: some of our poor obituarists kicked and screamed — even brayed — at

his funeral the other day; but we have had to come along. No man was more liberal in his attempts to improve Morris's mind than I was; but I always found that, in so far as I was not making a most horrible idiot of myself out of misknowledge (I could forgive myself for pure ignorance), he could afford to listen to me with the patience of a man who had taught my teachers. There were people whom we tried to run him down with — Tennysons, Swinburnes, and so on; but their opinions about things did not make any difference. Morris's did.

THE RED ROBE

Under the Red Robe: a romantic play in four acts, adapted by Edward Rose from the novel by Stanley Weyman. Haymarket Theatre, October 17, 1896.

IF the people who delight in the romances of Mr. Stanley Weyman and the detective stories of Mr. Conan Doyle belonged to the same social stratum as those who formerly read "Les Trois Mousquetaires" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," I should conclude that we were in a period of precipitous degeneration. I was brought up, romantically speaking, on D'Artagnan and Bussy d'Amboise; and I cannot say that I find Gil de Berault in any way up to their standard; whilst the descent from that ingenious automaton, Detective Dupin, to such a prince of duffers and dullards as Sherlock Holmes is one which, after a couple of attempts, I have given up as impossible. I therefore approach "Under the Red Robe" full of

prejudice against it. The very name appears to me a fatuity: it suggests a companion piece to "The White Silk Dress."

On the other hand, it is impossible to feel ill-disposed towards the new Haymarket enterprise. Mr. Harrison's management at the Lyceum was exceptionally brilliant, even among first-class managements. Mr. Cyril Maude and Miss Winifred Emery are among the most solidly popular of those happy couples who, by giving the sanction of an irreproachable domesticity to the wickedest of the arts, hallow the dissipations of the respectable London playgoer. Besides, I, as critic-dramatist, notoriously have a corrupt personal motive for doing all I can to enhance the prestige of the Maude-Harrison combination, and making success a matter of course at the Haymarket. On the whole, I think my prejudice is sufficiently balanced by my prepossession to allow me to proceed to the slaughter with a plausible pretence of openmindedness.

I began by reading the book — a better policy on the whole than the alternative one of making a merit of being in the dark about it. I thought it puerile to the uttermost publishable extreme of jejuniority. It is not without a painful effort that I can bring myself to confess even now that when I was fourteen, some of the romances I wove for myself may have presented me in the character of a dark-souled villain with a gorgeous female passionately denouncing me as "Spy!" "Traitor!" "Villain!" and then remorsefully worshipping me for some act of transcendent magnanimity on my part. But when I was fourteen boys had to keep these audacious imaginings to themselves on pain of intolerable ridicule. Since then the New Public has been manufactured under the Education Act; and

nowadays there is a fortune for the literary boy of fourteen, or even the literary adult who can remember vividly what a fool he was at that age.

I do not know how old Mr. Stanley Weyman is, but I can certify most positively that his Gil de Berault and Renée de Cocheforêt are nothing but the dark-souled villain-hero and the gorgeous female aforesaid, and that the old situation between them has accumulated nothing round it but a few commonplace duels and adventures, with a very feeble composite photograph of the Richelieus of Dumas and Lytton, and a bold annexation of the Lyttonian incident of the Cardinal pretending to send the hero to execution whilst really sending him to the arms of his lady love.

Mr. Edward Rose, in dramatizing such a novel, had to dramatize situation without character — that is, to make bricks without straw. Worse than that, he had to dramatize a situation the boyishness of which must become so flagrantly obvious to the wise under the searching glare of the footlights, that his only hope of acceptance lay in the as yet unfathomed abysses of the literary infancy of the New Public. Whether that public will support him is exactly what we are all wondering at present. As for me, I am getting on in life; I used to make my bread by my wit, and now have to make it by my reputation for wit; and I simply cannot afford to pretend that "Under the Red Robe" as a play has any charm for me. As a novel, I can pass my idle hour with it, just as Bismarck used to pass his with the police novels of Du Boisgobey; for, after all, Mr. Stanley Weyman is a bit of a story-teller — is, indeed, a rather concise and forcible narrator; and his books serve when the newspaper becomes unendurable. But as a play, involving the effort of

making up one's mind to go to the theatre, booking one's seat, going out at night, and so on — no, thank you. At least, not unless the adapter and the performers create some attraction not to be found in the book.

I must sorrowfully add that, for me at least, that attraction is not forthcoming; and I can only hope that the villain-hero and the gorgeous female may pull the play through and cover my disparagements with shame. Even if I accept the romance on its own ground, I have still to complain that the conventions of the theatre prevent Mr. Rose from faithfully carrying out the conception of the villain-hero. In the first chapter of the novel there is no mistake about the darkness of Gil de Berault's soul. He rooks an English lad by watching his cards in a mirror. A duel follows, in which, just as the lad perceives that he is hopelessly overmatched, an accident places his antagonist at his mercy. Being too young to understand that if you fight at all, you must fight to win, he refuses to avail himself of what he conceives as an unfair advantage. Gil teaches him not to confuse poetry with business by promptly running him through, and only escapes being lynched by the crowd through the most liberal exercise of his accomplishments as a bully. At the Haymarket all this is nonsensed by an endeavor to steer between Mr. Stanley Weyman's rights as author of the story and the prescriptive right of the leading actor to fight popularly and heroically against heavy odds. The Englishman is a giant and a swashbuckler. Instead of sparing Gil when he slips and falls, he rushes to make an end of him, and has his thrust parried by a miracle of address on the part of the prostrate hero, quite in the manner of the combat between the two Master

Crummleses. Then the adapter suddenly returns to the book; so that a gallant Frenchman, who, in the presence of a French crowd, has just fought and beaten a gigantic English bully of extra-special insular arrogance, is frantically mobbed by that French crowd for his behavior. In the interval between the first and second acts I asked several persons who had not read the book whether they could understand the behavior of the crowd. They were all, of course, completely bewildered by it.

Yet this first act is lucidity itself compared to the second, in which the necessity for collecting under one roof and into half an hour's time the incidents scattered by Mr. Weyman over many leagues and many days has driven Mr. Rose into desperate courses. In the novel Renée convicts Gil of spying by luring him to dog her for miles round the country, and then lying low for him round a corner. The Haymarket stage not being large enough for a paperchase, Mr. Rose has been driven to make Renée have Gil locked into his bedroom on the top-floor, and then catch him emerging deceitfully from the chimney (Mr. Waring calls it a secret passage; but the original conception is too obvious) on the ground-floor. Furthermore, Gil, instead of accidentally finding the diamonds in the street, breaks open the knife-drawer in the sideboard with his dagger, and steals them from that eligible hiding-place, declaring that "he never betrays the hand that pays him," a piece of morality — borrowed from the bravo in "Le Roi s'amuse" — which plunges the audience into deeper bewilderment every time Mr. Waring reiterates it. When at last the gorgeous female gets her chance to heap her disdain on his head, the audience, though prepared for a good deal, is not more

prepared for that than for anything else, and is too broken in spirit to rise to the situation. Not until the second scene of the third act does Gil at last make up his mind to be a hero; and the house, with a gasp of relief, exclaims, "Now we know where we are," and settles down to enjoy itself without further misgivings as to the relevance of the Tennysonian couplet on the playbill:

> "His honor rooted in dishonor stood;
> And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true."

I suggest that a happier selection would have been the epitaph which Jo Gargery could not afford to have cut on his father's tomb:

> "But whatsome'er the failings on his part,
> Remember, reader, he were that good in his heart."

As to the acting, it must be remembered that there is not the ghost of a character in the whole story. When this is allowed for, it will be admitted that the performance is a joyful sight. On the whole, I think I preferred — on the score of conciseness — Mr. Holman Clark's impersonation of Clon, the servant whose tongue had been cut out, and who made me regret occasionally that the same operation had not been performed on the others. Next to him my favorite was Mr. Cyril Maude, who wisely resolved that, since he could not make sense of his part, he would at any rate make fun of it. He frankly made Captain Larollè a pantaloon, and a very amusing pantaloon too. Judge, then, of the dismay of the audience when, before the play was half over, Clon suddenly seized Captain Larolle round the waist, and rolled with him over a fearful

precipice. For a moment we all had a desperate hope that Mr. Maude would bounce up through a star trap at the other side of the stage; take a harlequin's leap through the first-floor window of the château; and roll out again through the letter-box, closely pursued by Clon; but it was not to be: Captain Larolle was gone for ever; and I, for one, spent the rest of the evening lamenting his premature decease.

Mr. Waring's task was, on the whole, the easiest. When an actor has been condemned for years to move about the stage in ugly Bond Street tailorings, producing an effect of suppressed emotion by his anxiety to avoid creasing them, the effect of suddenly letting him loose as a swordsman in a picturesque costume is dazzling, astonishing, breath-bereaving. Here is Mr. Waring, who has created Torvald Helmer and Master Builder Solness in England, and who has played a dozen other parts at least better than this Gil de Berault; and yet, solely because he has exchanged the costume of a funeral mute for that of a cavalier, and fights a duel instead of handing his overcoat to a valet (always a most important incident in a coat-and-waistcoat play), he is suddenly hailed as a man who, after a meritorious but uneventful apprenticeship, has suddenly burst on the world as a great actor. Oh, the New Public! the New Public! indifferent or uncomfortable over fine work: enthusiastic over cheap jobs! Of course Mr. Waring does the thing on his head, so to speak; but how can I compliment an actor who has done what he has done on stuff like that?

Miss Winifred Emery has no such advantage as Mr. Waring. For a man, a Louis Treize costume is a miracle of elegance and romantic fascination compared to the costume of to-day; but the woman's cos-

tume of that time is too matronly for modern ideas of active womanhood. And then not only is the part an unblushingly bad one, limited to the merest mechanical feeding of the play with its one situation, but its verbal style is of that artificial kind which Miss Emery positively refuses (quite rightly) to take seriously. Unfortunately, nothing will cure Mr. Rose of this style. He writes it exactly as he might collect miniatures and snuffboxes; and I am convinced that in his heart he longs to make Miss Emery play in feathers and a train held up by two black boys. He sticks in gratuitous asides as pure curiosities, and occasionally goes the length of a bit of Shakespeare — for instance, "You 're mad to say so," when the burglary is discovered. My personal regard for Mr. Rose changes into malevolent exasperation under this treatment, especially when Miss Winifred Emery acts as the executioner. For when it comes to tall talk and sham antique, Miss Emery takes an attitude which is intolerably humiliating to any sensitive playgoer. The actress who consummated her reputation in "The Benefit of the Doubt" disappears; and in her place we have a cold, disgusted lady indulging an audience of foolish grown-up men with an exhibition for which she does not disguise her contempt. If one could detect the smallest gleam of humorous enjoyment in her delivery of the obsolete stageynesses of Bazilide and Renée, one could accept them as burlesque; but no such relenting is anywhere apparent. Even before she speaks, when she acknowledges her enthusiastic reception with that little catch of the lip and suffusion of the eye which is one of her most irresistible effects, there is scorn in her nostril. As she goes on she makes me feel indescribably abject: if her glance accidentally lights anywhere near

me, I instinctively dive under the stall in front, and make a miserable pretence of having dropped something. If only I could get up and assure her that I at least am not taken in by such trash, and am wholly innocent of the folly of the rest of my crawling sex, it would be a relief to me; but she unnerves me so that I dare not. She threw the business of Renée de Cocheforêt to that silly audience as she might have flung a bone to a troublesome dog; and they wagged their tails, and licked her hands, and yelped, and gobbled it as if it were the choicest morsel they had ever tasted, even from her. After all, why should she waste good acting on such baby-gabies?

In the scenic department some special effects of lighting were tried; but on the first night they were not quite up to the Bayreuth standard, though no doubt they are by this time working smoothly. The plan of representing firelight in an interior by making the footlights jump needs a more complete concealment of the gas flames — especially for people who are nervous about fire. In the decorations of the second act, instead of actual suits of armor, painted canvas profiles are used, perhaps in compliance with the demands of Mr. Rose for something old-fashioned. This seems to me to be mere atavism; but it does not matter much. The orchestra, which was put out of sight in Mr. Tree's time, is now put out of hearing. There has been a valuable addition to the depth of the stage; and very effective use is made of it in the last act. That reminds me, by the way, of Richelieu, which gave Mr. Sydney Valentine an opening for a bit of acting which was duly received as an astonishing rarity. Mr. Bernard Gould, made up as a Constable of France of the rugged warrior type, persuaded the audience

that he had a fine part, mainly by dint of concealing the fact that he privately knew better.

Altogether, a silly piece of business. Probably it will run for two seasons at least.

ON DEADHEADS AND OTHER MATTERS

Love in Idleness: an original comedy in three acts. By Louis N. Parker and Edward J. Goodman. Terry's Theatre, 21 October, 1896.
His Little Dodge: a comedy in three acts. By Justin Huntly McCarthy. From "Le Système Ribadier," by MM. Georges Feydeau and Maurice Hennequin. Royalty Theatre, 24 October, 1896.
The Storm: a play in one act and two tableaux. By Ian Robertson. Royalty Theatre, 24 October, 1896.

WHY must a farcical comedy always break down in the third act? One way of answering is to question the fact, citing "Pink Dominos" as an example of a three-act farcical comedy in which the third act was the best of the three. But what "Pink Dominos" really proved was that three acts of farce is too much for human endurance, no matter how brilliantly it may be kept going to the end. The public is apt to believe that it cannot have too much of a good thing. I remember stealing about four dozen apples from the orchard of a relative when I was a small boy, and retiring to a loft with a confederate to eat them. But when I had eaten eighteen I found, though I was still in robust health, that it was better

fun to pelt the hens with the remaining apples than to continue the banquet. Many grown persons have made cognate miscalculations. I have known a man, during the craze for "Nancy Lee," engage a street piano to play it continuously for two hours. I have known another bribe a hairdresser to brush his hair by machinery for an unlimited period. Both these voluptuaries, of course, discovered that the art of torture is the art of prolonging, not agony, but ecstasy. If we were to represent theatrical sensation by graphic curves in the manner of Jevons, we should find that the more acute the sensation, the more rapidly does its curve of enjoyment descend and dive into the negative. This is specially true of the enjoyment to be derived from farcical comedy. It is an unsympathetic enjoyment, and therefore an abuse of nature. The very dullest drama in five acts that ever attained for half a moment to some stir of feeling, leaves the spectator, however it may have bored him, happier and fresher than three acts of farcical comedy at which he has been worried into laughing incessantly with an empty heart. Mind, I am not moralizing about farcical comedy: I am simply giving the observed physical facts concerning it. In this clinical spirit I have over and over again warned the dramatist and the manager not to dwell too long on galvanic substitutes for genuine vivacity. When the vogue of farcical comedy was at its utmost, Mr. Gilbert applied its galvanic methods to public life and fashion instead of merely to clandestine sprees and adulterous intrigues. But he tried it cautiously in one act at first, and never ventured on more than two, with lavish allurements of song, dance, and spectacle to give it life and color, in spite of which the two acts always proved quite

enough. The fact is, the end of the second act is the point at which the spectators usually realize that the friendly interest in the persons of the drama which sustained them, and gave generosity and humanity to their merriment during the earlier scenes, is entirely undeserved, and that the pretty husband and handsome wife are the merest marionettes with witty dialogue stuck into their mouths. The worst thing that can happen in a play is that the people with whom the audience makes friends at first should disappoint it afterwards. Mr. Gilbert carried this disappointment further: he would put forward a paradox which at first promised to be one of those humane truths which so many modern men of fine spiritual insight, from William Blake onward, have worded so as to flash out their contradiction of some weighty rule of our systematized morality, and would then let it slip through his fingers, leaving nothing but a mechanical topsy-turvitude. Farcical comedy combines the two disappointments. Its philosophy is as much a sham as its humanity.

"His Little Dodge" is no exception to the two-act rule. At the outset Miss Ellis Jeffreys, suddenly developing a delightful talent for comedy, succeeds in winning all possible charm of expectation and indulgent interest for Lady Miranda. Mr. Weedon Grossmith, by a piece of acting so masterly in its combination of irresistibly comic effect with complete matter-of-courseness (there is not the faintest touch of grotesque in his dress, face, voice, or gesture from one end of the piece to the other) that I have seen nothing so artistic of its kind since Jefferson was here, filled us with the liveliest curiosity about the Honorable Mandeville Hobb. Mr. Fred Terry, as Sir Hercules, was genial enough

to engage our good will; and Mr. Maltby, with his comic conviction, and his unfailing appreciation of the right dramatic point of his part, made himself more than welcome. For a moment we were cheated into believing that we had met some real and likeable people; and nobody could deny that the play was outrageously funny. But our disenchantment was all the more irritating. The moment it became apparent that all these interesting and promising people were only puppets in a piece of farcical clockwork, the old disappointment, the old worry, the old rather peevish impatience with the remaining turns of the mechanism set in. A genuine dramatic development, founded on our interest in Lady Miranda as suggested to us by Miss Jeffreys in the first act, would have been followed with the most expectant attention; but hope changed to weary disgust when her husband picked up a waistcoat strap, and accused her of an intrigue with the gardener, whose waistcoat was deficient in that particular.

In "Love in Idleness" there is no such mistake as this. Mr. Parker knows only too well the value of an affectionate relation between the audience and the persons of the drama. Mortimer Pendlebury, the hero, is a lovable nincompoop, who muddles the affairs of all his friends, but so endears himself to Providence by his goodheartedness that they muddle themselves right again in the most cheerful way imaginable, and unite him to his long lost love, a nice old lady in lavender, impersonated by Miss Bella Pateman. Mr. Edward Terry, in a popular and not particularly trying part, hits the character exactly, and plays not only with comic force, but with tact and delicacy. But the acting success of the play is Mr. de Lange's fire-eating French Colonel, a perfectly original, absolutely con-

vincing, and extremely funny version of a part which, in any other hands, would have come out the most hackneyed stuff in the world. It is not often that two such impersonations as Pendlebury and Gondinot are to be seen at the same theatre; and if there is such a thing still surviving in London as an unprofessional connoisseur of acting, he will do well to see "Love in Idleness" for their sakes.

By the way, I forgot that "His Little Dodge" is preceded at the Royalty by a new piece called "The Storm," by Mr. Ian Robertson. It is like an adaptation of a sentimental Academy picture.

Mr. Alexander has been driven to take the Royalty as a chapel of ease to the St. James's by "The Prisoner of Zenda," which is now a permanent institution, like Madame Tussaud's. I saw it again the other night; and after "The Red Robe" I do not hesitate to pronounce it a perfectly delectable play. It has gained greatly in smoothness and charm since its first representation, except in the prologue, which is stagey and overplayed. Mr. Alexander as Rassendyl is as fresh as paint: so is Mr. Vernon as Sapt. Mr. H. B. Irving now plays Hentzau, and enjoys himself immensely over it, after his manner. He is, perhaps, our ablest exponent of acting as an amusement for young gentlemen, as his father is our ablest exponent of acting as a fine art and serious profession. Miss Julia Neilson now plays Flavia, and is a little less the princess and more the actress than Miss Millard. Mr. Aubrey Smith, as the black Elphberg, suffices in place of Mr. Waring, who was wasted on it; but the new Mayor's wife is hardly as fascinating as Miss Olga Brandon. Miss Ellis Jeffreys has made so brilliant a success in comedy at the Royalty, thereby very happily confirm-

ing the opinion of her real strength which I ventured upon when Mr. Pinero miscast her in "Mrs. Ebbsmith," that she can afford to forgive me if I confess that her Antoinette de Mauban struck me as being the very worst piece of acting an artist of her ability could conceivably perpetrate.

I am afraid Mrs. Kendal's opinion of the Press will not be improved by the printing of a letter of hers which was obviously not intended for publication. However, the blunder has incidentally done a public service by making known Mrs. Kendal's very sensible opinion that critics should pay for their seats. Of course they should: the complimentary invitation system is pure, unmitigated, indefensible corruption and blackmail, and nothing else. But are we alone to blame in the matter? When the managers abolish fees they put in their programmes a request that the public will not persist in offering them. Why then do they not only bribe me, but force me to accept the bribe? I must attend on the first night. If I try to book a stall as a member of the general public, I am told that there are none to be disposed of, all being reserved for invited guests, including the press. If I declare my identity, I am immediately accommodated, but not allowed to pay. From time to time we have virtuous announcements from beginners that they are going to do away with the system and pay for all their seats. That only proves that they *are* beginners, and are either making a virtue of necessity, or else are too inexperienced to know how the invitation system works. The public may take it that for the present it is practically compulsory. All that can be said for it is that it is at least an improvement on the abominable old system of "orders," under which newspapers claimed and exer-

cised the right to give orders of admission to the theatres to any one they pleased, the recipients being mostly tradesmen advertising in their papers. Nowadays, if an editor wants a free seat, he has to ask the manager for it; and some editors, I regret to say, still place themselves under heavy obligations to managers in this way. There are many papers just worth a ticket from the point of view of the experienced acting-manager if they deluge the house with constant and fulsome praise; and this is largely supplied by young men for no other consideration than the first-night stall, the result being, of course, a mass of corrupt puffery for which the complimentary Press ticket is solely responsible. Need I add that the personal position of a critic under the system is by no means a satisfactory one? Under some managements he can always feel secure of his footing as at least the guest of a gentleman — though even that is a false position for him; but he cannot confine himself to theatres so managed. I remember on one occasion, at no less a place than the Royal Italian Opera, a certain State official, well known and respected as a scholarly musician and writer on music, pitched into the Opera in the columns of this journal. Some time afterwards he appeared at Covent Garden in the box of a critic of the first standing, representing a very eminent daily paper. Sir Augustus Harris promptly objected to his complimentary box being used to harbor audacious persons who found fault with him. Of course the eminent daily paper immediately bought its box and went over the eminent *impresario* like a steamroller; but the incident shows how little a manager who is also a man of the world is disposed to admit the independence of the critic as long as he has to

oblige him. It is easy to say that it is a "mutual convenience"; but, in fact, it is a mutual inconvenience. If the incident just narrated had occurred at an ordinary theatre, where the necessary sort of seat for a critic is not always to be obtained on a first night for money, instead of at the Opera, where seats can practically always be bought, the manager might have seriously inconvenienced the critic, especially as the paper was a daily one, by boycotting him.

Let me mention another more recent and equally significant incident. At a first night last week a popular young actor of juvenile parts, in a theatre which he has himself managed, went out between the acts into the hall, which was crowded with critics, and announced in a loud voice, with indignant earnestness, that he had just seen no less revolting a spectacle than the critic of a leading newspaper walking into "the stalls of a London theatre" *not* in evening dress. He added many passionate expressions of his disgust for the benefit of the company, at least half a dozen of whom, including myself, wore simply the dress in which statesmen address public meetings and gentlemen go to church. And yet I rather sympathized with his irritation. The theatrical deadhead gets his ticket on the implied condition that he "dresses the house." If he comes in morning dress, or allows the ladies who accompany him to look dowdy, he is struck off the free-list. To this actor-manager we critics were not his fellow-guests, but simply deadheads whose business it was to "dress the house" and write puffs. What else do we get our free tickets for? Frankly, I don't know. If a critic is an honest critic, he will write the same notice from a purchased seat as from a presented one. He is not free to stay away if he is not invited:

a newspaper *must* notice a new play, just as much as it must notice an election. He keeps money out of the house by occupying a seat that would otherwise be sold to the public: therefore he costs the management half a guinea. As I have said, he cannot help himself; but that does not alter the fact, or make it less mischievous. Mrs. Kendal, who thinks we should pay for our tickets, is quite right; the impetuous ex-manager who thinks we should dress resplendently in return for our free tickets is quite right; and we are absolutely and defencelessly in the wrong.

As to the remedy, I shall deal with that another time.

IBSEN AHEAD!

Donna Diana: a poetical comedy in four acts. Adapted, and to a great extent rewritten, from the German version of Moreto's "El Desden con el Desden," by Westland Marston. Special revival. Prince of Wales Theatre, 4 November, 1896.

FEW performances have struck such terror into me as that of Westland Marston's "Donna Diana" on Wednesday afternoon. Hitherto I have looked tranquilly on at such reversions to the classically romantic style which held the English stage from the time of Otway to that of Sheridan Knowles and Westland Marston, because the trick of its execution had been so completely lost that the performances were usually as senselessly ridiculous as an attempt to give one of Hasse's operas at Bayreuth with Sucher and Vogl in the principal parts would be. But

such occasions have always provoked the disquieting reflection that since it is quite certain Mrs. Siddons produced extraordinary effects in such plays in times when they were, except in point of ceremonious manners, just as remote from real life as they are at present, there must clearly be some way of attacking them so as to get hold of an audience and escape all suggestion of derision. And on that came the threatening thought — suppose this way should be rediscovered, could any mortal power prevent the plays coming back to their kingdom and resuming their rightful supremacy? I say rightful; for they have irresistible credentials in their stageyness. The theatrical imagination, the love of the boards, produced this art and nursed it. When it was at his height the touches of nature in Shakespeare were not endured: the passages were altered and the events reshaped until they were of a piece with the pure-bred drama engendered solely by the passion of the stage-struck, uncrossed by nature, character, poetry, philosophy, social criticism, or any other alien stock. Stage kings and queens, stage lovers, stage tyrants, stage parents, stage villains and stage heroes were alone to be found in it; and, naturally, they alone were fit for the stage or in their proper place there. Generations of shallow critics, mostly amateurs, have laughed at Partridge for admiring the King in "Hamlet" more than Hamlet himself (with Garrick in the part), because "any one could see that the King was an actor." But surely Partridge was right. He went to the theatre to see, not a real limited monarch, but a stage king, speaking as Partridges like to hear a king speaking, and able to have people's heads cut off, or to browbeat treason from behind an invisible hedge of majestically asserted divinity. Field-

ing misunderstood the matter because in a world of Fieldings there would be neither kings nor Partridges. It is all very well for Hamlet to declare that the business of the theatre is to hold the mirror up to Nature. He is allowed to do it out of respect for the bard, just as he is allowed to say to a minor actor, "Do not saw the air thus," though he has himself been sawing the air all the evening, and the unfortunate minor actor has hardly had the chance of cutting a chip off with a penknife. But everybody knows perfectly well that the function of the theatre is to realize for the spectators certain pictures which their imagination craves for, the said pictures being fantastic as the dreams of Alnaschar. Nature is only brought in as an accomplice in the illusion: for example, the actress puts rouge on her cheek instead of burnt cork because it looks more natural; but the moment the illusion is sacrificed to nature, the house is up in arms and the play is chivied from the stage. I began my own dramatic career by writing plays in which I faithfully held the mirror up to nature. They are much admired in private reading by social reformers, industrial investigators, and revolted daughters; but on one of them being rashly exhibited behind the footlights, it was received with a paroxysm of execration, whilst the mere perusal of the others induces loathing in every person, including myself, in whom the theatrical instinct flourishes in its integrity. Shakespeare made exactly one attempt, in "Troilus and Cressida," to hold the mirror up to nature; and he probably nearly ruined himself by it. At all events, he never did it again; and practical experience of what was really popular in the rest of his plays led to "Venice Preserved" and "Donna Diana." It was the stagey element that held

the stage, not the natural element. In this way, too, the style of execution proper to these plays, an excessively stagey style, was evolved and perfected, the "palmy days" being the days when nature, except as a means of illusion, had totally vanished from both plays and acting. I need not tell over again the story of the late eclipse of the stagey drama during the quarter-century beginning with the success of Robertson, who, by changing the costume and the form of dialogue, and taking the Du Maurieresque, or garden party, plane, introduced a style of execution which effectually broke the tradition of stagey acting, and has left us at the present moment with a rising generation of actors who do not know their business. But ever since the garden-party play suddenly weakened and gave way to "The Sign of the Cross" and "The Red Robe" — ever since Mr. Lewis Waller as Hotspur, Mr. Alexander as King Rassendyl, and Mr. Waring as Gil de Berault have suddenly soared from a position of general esteem as well-tailored sticks into enthusiastic repute as vigorous and imaginative actors — it has become only too probable that the genuine old stagey drama only needs for its revival artists who, either by instinct or under the guidance of the Nestors of the profession, shall hit on the right method of execution.

Judge, then, of my consternation when Miss Violet Vanbrugh, with Nestor Hermann Vezin looking on from a box, and officially announced as the artistic counsellor of the management, attacked the part of Donna Diana in Westland Marston's obsolete play with the superbly charged bearing, the picturesque plastique, and the impassioned declamation which one associates with the Siddons school! More terrifying still, the play began to

live and move under this treatment. Cold drops stood on my brow as, turning to Mr. Archer, whose gloomy and bodeful eye seemed to look through and through Donna Diana to immeasurable disaster beyond, I said, "If this succeeds, we shall have the whole Siddons repertory back again." And, in a way, it did succeed. If Westland Marston had been a trifle less tamely sensible and sedately literary, and if the rest of the company had been able to play up to Miss Vanbrugh's pitch, it might have succeeded with frightful completeness. Fortunately none of the others quite attained the palmy plane. Mr. Vibart's defiant convexity of attitude had not the true classic balance — in fact, there were moments when his keeping any balance at all seemed to disprove gravitation. Mr. Bourchier, if one must be quite frank, is spreading himself at the waist so rapidly that he is losing his smartness and vocal resonance, and will, at his present rate of expansion, be fit for no part except Falstaff in a few years more. The actor who drinks is in a bad way; but the actor who eats is lost. Why, with such excellent domestic influences around him, is Mr. Bourchier not restrained from the pleasures of the table? He has also a trick of dashing at the end of a speech so impetuously that he is carried fully three words into the next before he can stop himself. If he has to say "How do you do? Glad to see you. Is your mother quite well?" it comes out thus: "How do you do glad to. See you is your mother. Quite well." All of which, though alleviated by tunics, tights and blank verse, is the harder to bear because Mr. Bourchier would be one of our best comedians if only he would exact that much, and nothing less, from himself. Mr. Elliot, cheered to find the old style looking up again,

played Perin with excellent discretion — was, indeed, the only male member of the cast who materially helped the play; and Mr. Kinghorne, though seemingly more bewildered than encouraged by the setting back of the clock, took his turn as "the sovereign duke of Barcelona" like a man to whom such crazy adventures had once been quite familiar. Miss Irene Vanbrugh, as the malapert waiting wench who, ever since the spacious times of great Elizabeth, has been the genteel blank-versemonger's notion of comic relief, fulfilled her doom with a not too ghastly sprightliness; but the other ladies were out of the question: they had not a touch of the requisite carriage and style, and presented themselves as two shapeless anachronisms, like a couple of English housemaids at the Court of Spain. Let us by all means congratulate ourselves to the full on the fact that our young actresses are at least not stagey; but let us also be careful not to confuse the actress who knows too much to be stagey with the actress who does not know enough.

For the rest, all I can say is that I was glad to look again on the front scenes of my youth, and to see Miss Vanbrugh, after announcing her skill as a lute player, appear with an imitation lyre, wrenched from the pedals of an old-fashioned grand piano, and gracefully pluck with her jewelled fingers at four brass bars about an eighth of an inch thick. If Miss Vanbrugh will apply to Mr. Arnold Dolmetsch, he will, I have no doubt, be glad to show her a real lute. She can return the service by showing him how very effective a pretty woman looks when she is playing it the right way. Though, indeed, that can be learnt from so many fifteenth-century painters that the wonder is that Miss Vanbrugh should not know all about it.

What, then, is to be the end of all this revival of stageyness? Is the mirror never again to be held up to nature in the theatre? Do not be alarmed, pious playgoer: people get tired of everything, and of nothing sooner than of what they most like. They will soon begin to loathe these romantic dreams of theirs, and crave to be tormented, vivisected, lectured, sermonized, appalled by the truths which they passionately denounce as monstrosities. Already, on the very top of the wave of stage illusion, rises Ibsen, with his mercilessly set mouth and seer's forehead, menacing us with a new play. Whereupon we realize how we have shirked the last one — how we have put off the torture of "Little Eyolf" as one puts off a visit to the dentist. But the torture tempts us in spite of ourselves; we feel that it must be gone through with; and now, accordingly, comes Miss Hedda Hilda Gabler Wangel Robins, christened Elizabeth, and bids us not only prepare to be tortured, but subscribe to enable her to buy the rack. A monstrous proposition, but one that has been instantly embraced. No sooner was it made than Mrs. Patrick Campbell volunteered for the Ratwife, the smallest part in "Little Eyolf," consisting of a couple of dozen speeches in the first act only. (Clever Mrs. Pat! it is, between ourselves, the most fascinating page of the play.) Miss Janet Achurch, the original and only Nora Helmer, jumped at the appalling part of Rita, whom nobody else on the stage dare tackle, for all her "gold and green forests." The subscriptions poured in so fast that the rack is now ready, and the executioners are practising so that no pang may miss a moan of its utmost excruciation. Miss Robins herself will play Asta, the sympathetic sister without whom, I verily believe, human nature could not bear this most

horrible play. The performances are announced to take place on successive afternoons from the 23rd to the 27th inclusive, at the Avenue Theatre; and there is a sort of hideous humor in the addition that if three people wish to get racked together, they can secure that privilege in the stalls at eight shillings apiece, provided they apply before the subscription closes on the 16th.

It will be remarked as a significant fact that though the women's parts in "Little Eyolf" have attracted a volunteer cast which no expenditure could better — enormously the strongest that has ever been brought to bear in England on an Ibsen play — we do not hear of eminent actors volunteering for the part of Allmers (to be played, I understand, by M. Courtenay Thorpe, whose Oswald, in "Ghosts," made an impression in America). The reason is that the actor who plays the man's part in Ibsen has to go under the harrow equally with the audience, suffering the shameful extremity of a weak soul stripped naked before an audience looking to him for heroism. Women do not mind ill usage so much, because the strongest position for a woman is that of a victim: besides, Ibsen is evidently highly susceptible to women, on which account they will forgive him anything, even such remorseless brutalities as Rita's reproach to her husband for his indifference to his conjugal privileges: "There stood your champagne; but you tasted it not," which would be an outrage if it were not a masterstroke. Apart from the sensational scene of the drowning of Little Eyolf at the end of the first act, the theatre and its characteristic imaginings are ruthlessly set aside for the relentless holding up of the mirror to Nature as seen under Ibsen rays that pierce our most secret cupboards and

reveal the grin of the skeleton there. The remorseless exposure and analysis of the marriage founded on passion and beauty and gold and green forests, the identity of its love with the cruellest hate, and of this same hate with the affection excited by the child (the "Kreutzer Sonata" theme), goes on, without the smallest concession to the claims of stageyness, until the pair are finally dismissed, somewhat tritely, to cure themselves as best they can by sea air and work in an orphanage. Yes, we shall have rare afternoons at the Avenue Theatre. If we do not get our eight shillings' worth of anguish it will not be Ibsen's fault.

Oddly enough, Miss Robins announces that the profits of the torture chamber will go towards a fund, under distinguished auditorship, for the performance of other plays, the first being the ultra-romantic, ultra-stagey, "Mariana" of Echegaray. When, on the publication of that play by Mr. Fisher Unwin, I urged its suitability for production, nobody would believe me, because events had not then proved the sagacity of my repeated assertions that the public were tired of tailormade plays, and were ripe for a revival of color and costume; and now, alas! my prophecies are forgotten in the excitement created by their fulfilment. That is the tragedy of my career. I shall die as I have lived, poor and unlucky, because I am like a clock that goes fast: I always strike twelve an hour before noon.

PEER GYNT IN PARIS

Peer Gynt: a dramatic poem in five acts, by Henrik Ibsen. Théâtre de l'Œuvre (Théâtre de la Nouveauté, Rue Blanche, Paris). 12 November, 1896.
Peer Gynt: translated into French prose, with a few passages in rhymed metre, by M. le Comte Prozor, in "La Nouvelle Revue," 15 May and 1 and 15 June, 1896.
Peer Gynt: a metrical translation into English by Charles and William Archer. London: Walter Scott. 1892.

THE humiliation of the English stage is now complete. Paris, that belated capital which makes the intelligent Englishman imagine himself back in the Dublin or Edinburgh of the eighteenth century, has been beforehand with us in producing "Peer Gynt." Within five months of its revelation in France through the Comte Prozor's translation, it has been produced by a French actor-manager who did *not* play the principal part himself, but undertook two minor ones which were not even mentioned in the programme. We have had the much more complete translation of Messrs. William and Charles Archer in our hands for four years; and we may confidently expect the first performance in 1920 or thereabouts, with much trumpeting of the novelty of the piece and the daring of the manager.

"Peer Gynt" will finally smash anti-Ibsenism in Europe, because Peer is everybody's hero. He has the same effect on the imagination that Hamlet, Faust and Mozart's Don Juan have had. Thousands of people who will never read another line of Ibsen will read

"Peer Gynt" again and again; and millions will be conscious of him as part of the poetic currency of the world without reading him at all. The witches in "Macbeth," the ghost in "Hamlet," the statue in "Don Juan," and Mephistopheles, will not be more familiar to the twentieth century than the Boyg, the Button Moulder, the Strange Passenger, and the Lean Person. It is of no use to argue about it; nobody who is susceptible to legendary poetry can escape the spell if he once opens the book, or — as I can now affirm from experience — if he once sees even the shabbiest representation of a few scenes from it. Take the most conscientious anti-Ibsenite you can find, and let him enlarge to his heart's content on the defects of Ibsen. Then ask him what about "Peer Gynt." He will instantly protest that you have hit him unfairly — that "Peer Gynt" must be left out of the controversy. I hereby challenge any man in England with a reputation to lose to deny that "Peer Gynt" is not one of his own and the world's very choicest treasures in its kind. Mind, gentlemen, I do not want to know whether "Peer Gynt" is right or wrong, good art or bad art: the question is whether you can get away from it — whether you ever had the same sensation before in reading a dramatic poem — whether you ever had even a kindred sensation except from the work of men whose greatness is now beyond question. The only people who have escaped the spell which, for good or evil, pleasurably or painfully, Ibsen's dramas cast on the imagination, are either those light-hearted paragraphists who gather their ideas by listening to one another braying, or else those who are taken out of their depth by Ibsen exactly as the music-hall amateur is taken out of his depth by Beethoven.

The Parisian production has been undertaken by M. Lugné Poe, of the Théâtre de l'Œuvre, whose performances of Ibsen and Maeterlinck here are well remembered. He used the translation by the Comte Prozor, which appeared in "La Nouvelle Revue," chiefly in prose, but with a few irresistibly metrical passages done into rhymed verse. Unfortunately, it was incomplete, especially in the fourth and fifth acts. The Saeter girls were omitted. The Anitra episode was represented by only one scene. The first part of the soliloquy before Memnon's statue was dovetailed into the last half of the soliloquy before the Sphinx, as if the two monuments were one and the same. In the fifth act the Strange Passenger and the Lean Person (the devil) were altogether sacrificed; and the Button Moulder's explanation to Peer of what "being oneself" really means was cut out of his part — an indefensibly stupid mutilation. The episode of the man who cuts off his finger, with his funeral in the last act, as well as the auction scene which follows, also vanished. M. Lugné Poe, in his acting version, restored the Strange Passenger's first entrance on board the ship; but in other respects he took the Prozor version with all its omissions, and cut it down still more. For instance, all the Egyptian scenes, Memnon, Sphinx, pyramids, Begriffenfeldt, Cairo madhouse and all, went at one slash. The scene in the water after the shipwreck, where Peer pushes the unfortunate cook off the capsized boat, but holds him up by the hair for a moment to allow him to pray without eliciting anything more to the purpose than "Give us this day our daily bread," was cut, with, of course, the vital episode of the second appearance of the Strange Passenger. As the performance nevertheless lasted nearly four hours — including,

however, a good deal of silly encoring of Grieg's music, and some avoidable intervals between the scenes — extensive curtailment was inevitable, a complete representation being only possible under Bayreuth conditions.

There was only one instance of deliberate melodramatic vulgarization of the poem. In the fourth act, after Peer has made a hopeless donkey of himself with his Hottentot Venus, and been tricked and robbed by her, he argues his way in his usual fashion back into his own self-respect, arriving in about three minutes at the point of saying,

> " It 's excusable, sure, if I hold up my head
> And feel my worth as the man, Peer Gynt,
> Also called Human-life's Emperor."

At this point Ibsen introduces the short scene in which we see the woman whom Peer has deserted, and who is faithfully waiting for him in the north, sitting outside the old hut in the sunshine, spinning and tending her goats, and singing her song of blessing on the absent man. Now it is of the essence of the contrast that Peer, excellently qualified at this moment, not to be the hero of Solveig's affectionate faith, but to make an intoxicating success in London at a Metropole banquet as a Nitrate King or big showman, should never think of her (though he is constantly recalling, more or less inaccurately, all sorts of scraps of his old experiences, including his amours with the Green Clad One), but should go on to the climax of his coronation by the lunatic Begriffenfeldt as " Emperor of Himself " with a straw crown in the Cairo bedlam. I regret to say that M. Lugné Poe so completely missed Ibsen's intention here, that he made Peer go to sleep *à propos de bottes;* darkened the stage; and exhibited Solveig

to him as a dream vision in the conventional Drury Lane fourth-act style. For which, in my opinion (which is softened by the most friendly personal disposition towards M. Poe), he ought to have been gently led away and guillotined. It is quite clear that Peer Gynt remains absolutely unredeemed all through this elderly period of his career; and even when we meet him in the last act returning to Norway an old man, he is still the same clever, vain, greedy, sentimental, rather fascinating braggart and egoist. When the ship runs down a boat he frantically denounces the inhumanity of the cook and sailors because they will not accept his money to risk their lives in an attempt to save the drowning men. Immediately after, when the ship is wrecked, he drowns the cook to save his own life without a moment's remorse. Then up comes the Strange Passenger out of the depths to ask him whether he has never even once — say once in six months — felt that strange sense (that occasionally desperately dangerous sense, as Ibsen well knows) for which we have dozens of old creed names — "divine grace," "the fear of God," "conviction of sin," and so on — but no quite satisfactory modern one. Peer no more understands what he means than if he were an average London journalist. His glimpse of the fact that the Strange Passenger is not, as he at first feared, the devil, but rather a divine messenger, simply relieves his terror. In the country graveyard where, chancing on the funeral of the hero of the chopped finger, a man completely the reverse of himself, he hears the priest's tribute to the character of the deceased, he says:

> "I could almost believe it was I that slept
> And heard in a vision my panegyric."

In these scenes, in the one at the auction, in the wood where, comparing himself to the wild onion he is eating, he strips off the successive layers to find the core of it, and, finding that it is all layers and no core, exclaims, "Nature is witty," there is no sign of the final catastrophe except a certain growing desperation, an ironical finding of himself out, which makes a wonderful emotional undercurrent through the play in this act. It is not until he stumbles on the hut, and hears the woman singing in it, that the blow falls, and for the first time the mysterious sense mentioned by the Strange Passenger seizes him. With this point rightly brought out, the symbolism of the following scenes becomes more vivid and real than all the real horses and real water ever lavished on a popular melodrama. Peer's wild run through the night over the charred heath, stumbling over the threadballs and broken straws, dripped upon by the dewdrops, pelted by the withered leaves that are all that is left of the songs he should have sung, the tears he should have wept, the beliefs he should have proclaimed, the deeds he should have achieved, is fantastic only in so far as it deals with realities that cannot be presented prosaically. As the divine case against Peer is followed up, the interest accumulates in a way that no Adelphi court-martial can even suggest. The reappearance of the Strange Passenger as the Button Moulder commissioned to melt up Peer in his casting ladle as so much unindividualized raw material; Peer's frantic attempts to prove that he has always been pre-eminently himself, and his calling as a witness the old beggared Troll king, who testifies, on the contrary, that Peer is a mere troll, shrunk into nothing by the troll principle of being sufficient to himself; Peer's change of ground, and his attempt

to escape even into hell by proving that he had at least risen to some sort of individuality as a great sinner, only to have his poor little list of sins (among which he never dreams of mentioning his desertion of Solveig — the only sin big enough to save him) contemptuously rejected by the devil as not worth wasting brimstone on; and his final conviction and despair, from which he is only rescued by the discovery of "Peer Gynt as himself" in the faith, hope, and love of the blind old woman who takes him to her arms: all this deadly earnest is handled with such ironic vivacity, such grimly intimate humor, and finally with such tragic pathos, that it excites, impresses, and touches even those whom it utterly bewilders. Indeed, the ending is highly popular, since it can so easily be taken as implying the pretty middle-class doctrine that all moral difficulties find their solution in love as the highest of all things — a doctrine which, after several years' attentive observation, and a few careful personal experiments, I take to be the utmost attainable extreme of nonsensical wickedness and folly. The real Ibsenist solution is, of course, that there is no "solution" at all, any more than there is a philosopher's stone.

At the L'Œuvre performance, this trial of a sinner was very concisely summarized; but the point of it was by no means entirely missed. The Strange Passenger received a round of applause; the Button Moulder was appreciated; and the demonstration elicited by the climax of Peer Gynt's burst of despair, "Qu'on trace ces mots sur ma tombe: Ci-gît personne," showed how effectually Ibsen, at his most abstract point, can draw blood even from a congenitally unmetaphysical nation, to which the play seems as much a mixture of sentiment and stage *diablerie* as "Faust"

seemed to Gounod. Two other scenes moved the audience deeply. One was where Solveig joins Peer in the mountains, and is left by him with the words, "Be my way long or short, you must wait for me"; and the other, which produced a tremendous effect — we should have "Peer Gynt" in London this season if any of our actor-managers had been there to witness it — the death of Peer's mother. The rest was listened to with alert interest and occasional amazement, which was not always Ibsen's fault. Only one scene — that with the Boyg — failed, because it was totally unintelligible. It was presented as a continuation of the Dovre scene — in itself puzzling enough; and the audience stared in wonder at a pitchy dark stage, with Peer howling, a strange voice squealing behind the scenes, a woman calling at intervals, and not a word that any one could catch. It was let pass with politely smothered laughter as a characteristic Ibsen insanity; though whether this verdict would have been materially changed if the dialogue had been clearly followed is an open question; for the Boyg (called "Le Tordu" by the Comte Prozor, and "Le Tortueux" in the playbill), having elusiveness as his natural speciality, is particularly hard to lay hold of in the disguise of an allegory.

As to the performance, I am not sure that I know how good the actors were; for Ibsen's grip of humanity is so powerful that almost any presentable performer can count on a degree of illusion in his parts which Duse herself failed to produce when she tried Shakespeare. To say that Deval did not exhaust his opportunity as Peer is only to say that he is not quite the greatest tragic, comic, and character actor in the world. He misunderstood the

chronology of the play, and made Peer no older on the ship than in Morocco, whilst in the last scene he made him a doddering centenarian. He spoiled the famous comment on the blowing up of the yacht, "God takes fatherly thought for my personal weal; but economical! — no, that he is n't," by an untimely stage fall; but otherwise he managed the part intelligently and played with spirit and feeling. Albert-Mayer played no less than four parts: the Boyg, Aslak the Smith, the Strange Passenger, and the Button Moulder, and was good in all, bar the Boyg. Lugné Poe himself played two parts, Solveig's father and the travelling Englishman, Mr. Cotton. Mr. Cotton was immense. He was a fair, healthy, good-looking young man, rather heavy in hand, stiff with a quiet determination to hold his own among that gang of damned foreigners, and speaking French with an accent which made it a joy to hear him say "C'est trop dire" ("Say trow deah," with the tongue kept carefully back from the teeth). He certainly did infinite credit to the activity and accuracy of Lugné Poe's observation during his visit to this country. Suzanne Auclaire, who will be vividly remembered by all those who saw her here as Hilda Wangel in "The Master Builder," was cast for Solveig, not altogether wisely, I think, as the part is too grave and maternal for her. In the last scene, which she chanted in a golden voice very much à la Bernhardt, she did not represent Solveig as blind, nor did her make-up suggest anything more than a dark Southern woman of about forty-two, although Peer was clearly at least ninety-nine, and by no means young for his age: in fact, he might have been the original pilgrim with the white locks flowing. Her naïve charm carried her well

through the youthful scenes; but on the whole she was a little afraid of the part, and certainly did not make the most of it. Madame Barbieri, as Ase, was too much the stage crone; but she probably had no alternative to that or betraying her real age, which was much too young. She must have been abundantly satisfied with the overwhelming effect of her death scene. The only altogether inefficient member of the cast was the Green Clad One, who did not understand her part, and did not attend to Ibsen's directions. And the Brat, unfortunately, was a rather pretty child, very inadequately disfigured by a dab of burnt cork on the cheek.

Many thousand pounds might be lavished on the scenery and mounting of "Peer Gynt." M. Lugné Poe can hardly have lavished twenty pounds on it. Peer Gynt's costume as the Prophet was of the Dumb Crambo order: his caftan was an old dressing-gown, and his turban, though authentic, hardly new. There was no horse and — to my bitter disappointment — no pig. A few pantomime masks, with allfours and tails, furnished forth the trolls in the Dovre scene; and the explosion of the yacht was represented by somebody upsetting a chair in the wing. Anitra, with black curtains of hair transfixed by peonies over each ear, a whited face, and a general air of being made up with the most desperate inadequacy of person and wardrobe after Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Juliet, insisted upon an encore for a dance which M. Fouquier, of the "Figaro," described, without exaggeration, as "les contorsions d'un lièvre qui a reçu un coup de feu dans les reins." And yet this performance took place in a theatre nearly as large as Drury Lane, completely filled with an audience of much the same class as one

sees here at a Richter concert. Miss Robins would not dream of presenting "Little Eyolf" at the Avenue Theatre next week so cheaply. But it mattered very little. M. Lugné Poe showed in London that he could catch more of the atmosphere of a poetic play with the most primitive arrangements than some of our managers succeed in doing at a ruinous outlay. Of course the characteristic Northern hardheaded, hardfisted humor, the Northern power of presenting the deepest truths in the most homely grotesques, was missed: M. Poe, with all his realism, could no more help presenting the play sentimentally and sublimely than M. Lamoureux can help conducting the overture to "Tannhäuser" as if it were the "Marseillaise"; but the universality of Ibsen makes his plays come home to all nations; and Peer Gynt is just as good a Frenchman as a Norwegian, just as Dr. Stockman is as intelligible in Bermondsey or Bournemouth as he is in his native town.

I have to express my obligation to the editor of "La Nouvelle Revue" for very kindly lending me his private copy of the numbers containing the Prozor translation. Otherwise I must have gone without, as the rest of the edition was sold out immediately after the performance.

LITTLE EYOLF

Little Eyolf: a play in three acts, by Henrik Ibsen. Avenue Theatre, 23 November, 1896.

THE happiest and truest epithet that has yet been applied to the Ibsen drama in this country came from Mr. Clement Scott when he said that Ibsen was "suburban." That is the whole secret of it. If Mr. Scott had only embraced his discovery instead of quarrelling with it, what a splendid Ibsen critic he would have made! Suburbanity at present means modern civilization. The active, germinating life in the households of to-day cannot be typified by an aristocratic hero, an ingenuous heroine, a gentleman-forger abetted by an Artful Dodger, and a parlormaid who takes half-sovereigns and kisses from the male visitors. Such interiors exist on the stage, and nowhere else: therefore the only people who are accustomed to them and at home in them are the dramatic critics. But if you ask me where you can find the Helmer household, the Allmers household, the Solness household, the Rosmer household, and all the other Ibsen households, I reply, "Jump out of a train anywhere between Wimbledon and Haslemere; walk into the first villa you come to; and there you are." Indeed you need not go so far: Hampstead, Maida Vale, or West Kensington will serve your turn; but it is as well to remind people that the true suburbs are now the forty-mile radius, and that Camberwell and Brixton are no longer the suburbs, but the overflow of Gower Street — the genteel slums, in short. And this suburban life, except in so far as it is totally vegetable and undramatic, is the life depicted

by Ibsen. Doubtless some of our critics are quite sincere in thinking it a vulgar life, in considering the conversations which men hold with their wives in it improper, in finding its psychology puzzling and unfamiliar, and in forgetting that its bookshelves and its music cabinets are laden with works which did not exist for them, and which are the daily bread of young women educated very differently from the sisters and wives of their day. No wonder they are not at ease in an atmosphere of ideas and assumptions and attitudes which seem to them bewildering, morbid, affected, extravagant, and altogether incredible as the common currency of suburban life. But Ibsen knows better. His suburban drama is the inevitable outcome of a suburban civilization (meaning a civilization that appreciates fresh air); and the true explanation of Hedda Gabler's vogue is that given by Mr. Grant Allen — "I take her in to dinner twice a week."

Another change that the critics have failed to reckon with is the change in fiction. Byron remarked that

> "Romances paint at full length people's wooings,
> But only give a bust of marriages."

That was true enough in the days of Sir Walter Scott, when a betrothed heroine with the slightest knowledge of what marriage meant would have shocked the public as much as the same ignorance to-day would strike it as tragic if real, and indecent if simulated. The result was that the romancer, when he came to a love scene, had to frankly ask his "gentle reader" to allow him to omit the conversation as being necessarily too idiotic to interest any one. We have fortunately long passed out of that stage in novels. By the time we had reached "Vanity Fair" and "Middlemarch" — both

pretty old and prim stories now — marriage had become the starting point of our romances. Love is as much the romancer's theme as ever; but married love and the courtships of young people who are appalled by the problems of life and motherhood have left the governesses and curates, the Amandas and Tom Joneses of other days, far out of sight. Ten years ago the stage was as far behind Sir Walter Scott as he is behind Madame Sarah Grand. But when Ibsen took it by the scruff of the neck just as Wagner took the Opera, then, willy nilly, it had to come along. And now what are the critics going to do? The Ibsen drama is pre-eminently the drama of marriage. If dramatic criticism receives it in the spirit of the nurse's husband in "Romeo and Juliet," if it grins and makes remarks about "the secrets of the alcove," if it pours forth columns which are half pornographic pleasantry and the other half sham propriety, then the end will be, not in the least that Ibsen will be banned, but that dramatic criticism will cease to be read. And what a frightful blow that would be to English culture!

"Little Eyolf" is an extraordinarily powerful play, although none of the characters are as fascinatingly individualized as Solness or Rosmer, Hedda or Nora. The theme is a marriage — an ideal marriage from the suburban point of view. A young gentleman, a student and an idealist, is compelled to drudge at teaching to support himself. He meets a beautiful young woman. They fall in love with one another; and by the greatest piece of luck in the world (suburbanly considered) she has plenty of money. Thus is he set free by his marriage to live his own life in his own way. That is just where an ordinary play leaves off, and just where an Ibsen play begins. The husband begins

to make those discoveries which everybody makes, except, apparently, the dramatic critics. First, that love, instead of being a perfectly homogeneous, unchanging, unending passion, is of all things the most mutable. It will pass through several well-marked stages in a single evening, and, whilst seeming to slip back to the old starting point the next evening, will yet not slip quite back; so that in the course of years it will appear that the moods of an evening were the anticipation of the evolution of a lifetime. But the evolution does not occur in different people at the same time or in the same order. Consequently the hero of "Little Eyolf," being an imaginative, nervous, thoughtful person, finds that he has had enough of caresses, and wants to dream alone among the mountain peaks and solitudes, whilst his wife, a warm-blooded creature, has only found her love intensified to a fiercely jealous covetousness of him. His main refuge from this devouring passion is in his peacefully affectionate relations with his sister, and in certain suburban dreams very common among literary amateurs living on their wives' incomes: to wit, forming the mind and character of his child, and writing a great book (on "Human Responsibility" if you please). Of course the wife, in her jealousy, hates the sister, hates the child, hates the book, hates her husband for making her jealous of them, and hates herself for her hatreds with the frightful logic of greedy, insatiable love. Enter then our old friend, Ibsen's divine messenger. The Ratwife, alias the Strange Passenger, alias the Button Moulder, alias Ulrik Brendel, comes in to ask whether there are any little gnawing things there of which she can rid the house. They do not understand — the divine messenger in Ibsen never is understood, es-

pecially by the critics. So the little gnawing thing in the house — the child — follows the Ratwife and is drowned, leaving the pair awakened by the blow to a frightful consciousness of themselves, the woman as a mere animal, the man as a moonstruck nincompoop, keeping up appearances as a suburban lady and gentleman with nothing to do but enjoy themselves. Even the sister has discovered now that she is not really a sister — also a not unprecedented suburban possibility — and sees that the passionate stage is ahead of her too; so, though she loves the husband, she has to get out of his way by the pre-eminently suburban expedient of marrying a man whom she does not love, and who, like Rita, is warm-blooded and bent on the undivided, unshared possession of the object of his passion. At last the love of the woman passes out of the passionate stage; and immediately, with the practical sense of her sex, she proposes, not to go up into the mountains or to write amateur treatises, but to occupy herself with her duties as landed proprietress, instead of merely spending the revenues of her property in keeping a monogamic harem. The gentleman asks to be allowed to lend a hand; and immediately the storm subsides, easily enough, leaving the couple on solid ground. This is the play, as actual and near to us as the Brighton and South Coast Railway — this is the mercilessly heart-searching sermon, touching all of us somewhere, and some of us everywhere, which we, the critics, have summed up as "secrets of the alcove." Our cheeks, whose whiteness Mr. Arthur Roberts has assailed in vain, have mantled at "the coarseness and vulgarity which are noted characteristics of the author" (I am quoting, with awe, my fastidiously high-toned colleague of the "Standard"). And yet the divine messenger

only meant to make us ashamed of ourselves. That is the way divine messengers always do muddle their business.

The performance was of course a very remarkable one. When, in a cast of five, you have the three best yet discovered actresses of their generation, you naturally look for something extraordinary. Miss Achurch was the only one who ran any risk of failure. The Ratwife and Asta are excellent parts; but they are not arduous ones. Rita, on the other hand, is one of the heaviest ever written: any single act of it would exhaust an actress of no more than ordinary resources. But Miss Achurch was more than equal to the occasion. Her power seemed to grow with its own expenditure. The terrible outburst at the end of the first act did not leave a scrape on her voice (which appears to have the compass of a military band) and threw her into victorious action in that tearing second act instead of wrecking her. She played with all her old originality and success, and with more than her old authority over her audience. She had to speak some dangerous lines — lines of a kind that usually find out the vulgar spots in an audience and give an excuse for a laugh — but nobody laughed or wanted to laugh at Miss Achurch. "There stood your champagne; but you tasted it not," neither shirked nor slurred, but driven home to the last syllable, did not elicit an audible breath from a completely dominated audience. Later on I confess I lost sight of Rita a little in studying the surprising capacity Miss Achurch showed as a dramatic instrument. For the first time one clearly saw the superfluity of power and the vehemence of intelligence which make her often so reckless as to the beauty of her methods of expression. As Rita she pro-

duced almost every sound that a big human voice can, from a creak like the opening of a rusty canal lock to a melodious tenor note that the most robust Siegfried might have envied. She looked at one moment like a young, well-dressed, very pretty woman: at another she was like a desperate creature just fished dripping out of the river by the Thames police. Yet another moment, and she was the incarnation of impetuous, ungovernable strength. Her face was sometimes winsome, sometimes listlessly wretched, sometimes like the head of a statue of Victory, sometimes suffused, horrible, threatening, like Bellona or Medusa. She would cross from left to right like a queen, and from right to left with, so to speak, her toes turned in, her hair coming down, and her slippers coming off. A more utter recklessness, not only of fashion, but of beauty, could hardly be imagined: beauty to Miss Achurch is only one effect among others to be produced, not a condition of all effects. But then she can do what our beautiful actresses cannot do: she can attain the force and terror of Sarah Bernhardt's most vehement explosions without Sarah's violence and abandonment, and with every appearance of having reserves of power still held in restraint. With all her cleverness as a realistic actress she must be classed technically as a heroic actress; and I very much doubt whether we shall see her often until she comes into the field with a repertory as highly specialized as that of Sir Henry Irving or Duse. For it is so clear that she would act an average London success to pieces and play an average actor-manager off the stage, that we need not expect to see much of her as that useful and pretty auxiliary, a leading lady.

Being myself a devotee of the beautiful school, I

like being enchanted by Mrs. Patrick Campbell better than being frightened, harrowed, astonished, conscience-stricken, devastated, and dreadfully delighted in general by Miss Achurch's untamed genius. I have seen Mrs. Campbell play the Ratwife twice, once quite enchantingly, and once most disappointingly. On the first occasion Mrs. Campbell divined that she was no village harridan, but the messenger of heaven. She played supernaturally, beautifully: the first notes of her voice came as from the spheres into all that suburban prose: she played to the child with a witchery that might have drawn him not only into the sea, but into her very bosom. Nothing jarred except her obedience to Ibsen's stage direction in saying "Down where all the rats are" harshly, instead of getting the effect, in harmony with her own inspired reading, by the most magical tenderness. The next time, to my unspeakable fury, she amused herself by playing like any melodramatic old woman, a profanation for which, whilst my critical life lasts, never will I forgive her. Of Miss Robins's Asta it is difficult to say much, since the part, played as she plays it, does not exhibit anything like the full extent of her powers. Asta is a study of a temperament — the quiet, affectionate, enduring, reassuring, faithful, domestic temperament. That is not in the least Miss Robins's temperament: she is nervous, restless, intensely self-conscious, eagerly energetic. In parts which do not enable her to let herself loose in this, her natural way, she falls back on pathos, on mute misery, on a certain delicate plaintive note in her voice and grace in her bearing which appeal to our sympathy and pity without realizing any individuality for us. She gave us, with instinctive tact and refinement, the "niceness," the considerateness, the

ladylikeness, which differentiate Asta from the wilful, passionate, somewhat brutal Rita. Perhaps only an American playing against an Englishwoman could have done it so discriminately; but beyond this and the pathos there was nothing: Asta was only a picture, and, like a picture, did not develop. The picture, being sympathetic and pretty, has been much admired; but those who have not seen Miss Robins play Hilda Wangel have no idea of what she is like when she really acts her part instead of merely giving an urbanely pictorial representation of it. As to Allmers, how could he recommend himself to spectators who saw in him everything that they are ashamed of in themselves? Mr. Courtenay Thorpe played very intelligently, which, for such a part, and in such a play, is saying a good deal; but he was hampered a little by the change from the small and intimate auditorium in which he has been accustomed to play Ibsen, to the Avenue, which ingeniously combines the acoustic difficulties of a large theatre with the pecuniary capacity of a small one. Master Stewart Dawson, as Eyolf, was one of the best actors in the company. Mr. Lowne, as Borgheim, was as much out of tone as a Leader sunset in a Rembrandt picture — no fault of his, of course (the audience evidently liked him), but still a blemish on the play.

And this brings me to a final criticism. The moment I put myself into my old attitude as musical critic, I at once perceive that the performance, as a whole, was an unsatisfactory one. You may remonstrate, and ask me how I can say so after admitting that the performers showed such extraordinary talent — even genius. It is very simple, nevertheless. Suppose you take Isaye, Sarasate, Joachim, and Hofmann, and tumble them all

together to give a scratch performance of one of Beethoven's posthumous quartets at some benefit concert. Suppose you also take the two De Reszkes, Calvé, and Miss Eames, and set them to sing a glee under the same circumstances. They will all show prodigious individual talent; but the resultant performances of the quartet and glee will be inferior, as wholes, to that of an ordinary glee club or group of musicians who have practised for years together. The Avenue performance was a parallel case. There was nothing like the atmosphere which Lugné Poe got in "Rosmersholm." Miss Achurch managed to play the second act as if she had played it every week for twenty years; but otherwise the performance, interesting as it was, was none the less a scratch one. If only the company could keep together for a while! But perhaps that is too much to hope for at present, though it is encouraging to see that the performances are to be continued next week, the five matinées — all crowded, by the way — having by no means exhausted the demand for places.

Several performances during the past fortnight remain to be chronicled; but Ibsen will have his due; and he has not left me room enough to do justice to any one else this week.

TOUJOURS SHAKESPEARE

As You Like It. St. James's Theatre, 2 December, 1896.

THE irony of Fate prevails at the St. James's Theatre. For years we have been urging the managers to give us Shakespeare's plays as he wrote them, playing them intelligently and enjoyingly as pleasant stories, instead of mutilating them, altering them, and celebrating them as superstitious rites. After three hundred years Mr. George Alexander has taken us at our words, as far as the clock permits, and given us "As You Like It" at full four hours' length. And, alas! it is just too late: the Bard gets his chance at the moment when his obsolescence has become unendurable. Nevertheless, we were right; for this production of Mr. Alexander's, though the longest, is infinitely the least tedious, and, in those parts which depend on the management, the most delightful I have seen. But yet, what a play! It was in "As You Like It" that the sententious William first began to openly exploit the fondness of the British Public for sham moralizing and stage "philosophy." It contains one passage that specially exasperates me. Jaques, who spends his time, like Hamlet, in vainly emulating the wisdom of Sancho Panza, comes in laughing in a superior manner because he has met a fool in the forest, who

> "Says very wisely, It is ten o'clock.
> Thus we may see [quoth he] how the world wags.
> 'T is but an hour ago since it was nine;

> And after one hour more, 't will be eleven.
> And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe;
> And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot;
> And thereby hangs a tale."

Now, considering that this fool's platitude is precisely the "philosophy" of Hamlet, Macbeth ("To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow," &c.), Prospero, and the rest of them, there is something unendurably aggravating in Shakespeare giving himself airs with Touchstone, as if he, the immortal, ever, even at his sublimest, had anything different or better to say himself. Later on he misses a great chance. Nothing is more significant than the statement that "all the world 's a stage." The whole world *is* ruled by theatrical illusion. Between the Cæsars, the emperors, the Christian heroes, the Grand Old Men, the kings, prophets, saints, heroes and judges, of the newspapers and the popular imagination, and the actual Juliuses, Napoleons, Gordons, Gladstones, and so on, there is the same difference as between Hamlet and Sir Henry Irving. The case is not one of fanciful similitude, but of identity. The great critics are those who penetrate and understand the illusion: the great men are those who, as dramatists planning the development of nations, or as actors carrying out the drama, are behind the scenes of the world instead of gaping and gushing in the auditorium after paying their taxes at the doors. And yet Shakespeare, with the rarest opportunities of observing this, lets his pregnant metaphor slip, and, with his usual incapacity for pursuing any idea, wanders off into a grandmotherly Elizabethan edition of the advertisement of Cassell's "Popular Educator." How anybody over the age of seven can take any interest

in a literary toy so silly in its conceit and common in its ideas as the Seven Ages of Man passes my understanding. Even the great metaphor itself is inaccurately expressed; for the world is a playhouse, not merely a stage; and Shakespeare might have said so without making his blank verse scan any worse than Richard's exclamation, "All the world to nothing!"

And then Touchstone, with his rare jests about the knight that swore by his honor they were good pancakes! Who would endure such humor from any one but Shakespeare? — an Eskimo would demand his money back if a modern author offered him such fare. And the comfortable old Duke, symbolical of the British villa dweller, who likes to find "sermons in stones and good in everything," and then to have a good dinner! This unvenerable impostor, expanding on his mixed diet of pious twaddle and venison, rouses my worst passions. Even when Shakespeare, in his efforts to be a social philosopher, does rise for an instant to the level of a sixth-rate Kingsley, his solemn self-complacency infuriates me. And yet, so wonderful is his art, that it is not easy to disentangle what is unbearable from what is irresistible. Orlando one moment says:

> "Whate'er you are
> That in this desert inaccessible
> Under the shade of melancholy boughs
> Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time,"

which, though it indicates a thoroughly unhealthy imagination, and would have been impossible to, for instance, Chaucer, is yet magically fine of its kind. The next moment he tacks on lines which would have revolted Mr. Pecksniff:

> " If ever you have looked on better days,
> If ever been where bells have knolled to church,
> [*How perfectly the atmosphere of the rented pew is caught in this incredible line!*]
> If ever sat at any good man's feast,
> If ever from your eyelids wiped — "

I really shall get sick if I quote any more of it. Was ever such canting, snivelling, hypocritical unctuousness exuded by an actor anxious to show that he was above his profession, and was a thoroughly respectable man in private life? Why cannot all this putrescence be cut out of the play, and only the vital parts — the genuine story-telling, the fun, the poetry, the drama, be retained? Simply because, if nothing were left of Shakespeare but his genius, our Shakespearolaters would miss all that they admire in him.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the fascination of " As You Like It " is still very great. It has the overwhelming advantage of being written for the most part in prose instead of in blank verse, which any fool can write. And such prose! The first scene alone, with its energy of exposition, each phrase driving its meaning and feeling in up to the head at one brief, sure stroke, is worth ten acts of the ordinary Elizabethan sing-song. It cannot be said that the blank verse is reserved for those passages which demand a loftier expression, since Le Beau and Corin drop into it, like Mr. Silas Wegg, on the most inadequate provocation; but at least there is not much of it. The popularity of Rosalind is due to three main causes. First, she only speaks blank verse for a few minutes. Second, she only wears a skirt for a few minutes (and the dismal effect of the change at the end to the wedding-dress ought to convert the stupidest champion of petticoats to rational dress).

Third, she makes love to the man instead of waiting for the man to make love to her — a piece of natural history which has kept Shakespeare's heroines alive, whilst generations of properly governessed young ladies, taught to say "No" three times at least, have miserably perished.

The performance at the St. James's is in some respects very good and in no respect very bad or even indifferent. Miss Neilson's Rosalind will not bear criticism for a moment; and yet the total effect is pardonable, and even pleasant. She bungles speech after speech; and her attacks of Miss Ellen Terry and Mrs. Patrick Campbell are acute, sudden and numerous; but her personal charm carries her through; and her song is a great success: besides, who ever failed, or could fail, as Rosalind? Miss Fay Davis is the best Celia I ever saw, and Miss Dorothea Baird the prettiest Phœbe, though her part is too much cut to give her any chance of acting. Miss Kate Phillips is an appallingly artificial Audrey; for, her style being either smart or nothing, her conscientious efforts to be lumpish land her in the impossible. And then, what is that artistically metropolitan complexion doing in the Forest of Arden?

Ass as Jaques is, Mr. W. H. Vernon made him more tolerable than I can remember him. Every successive production at the St. James's leaves one with a greater admiration than before for Mr. Vernon's talent. That servile apostle of working-class Thrift and Teetotalism (O William Shakespeare, Esquire, you who died drunk, WHAT a moral chap you were!) hight Adam, was made about twenty years too old by Mr. Loraine, who, on the other hand, made a charming point by bidding farewell to the old home with a smile instead of the

conventional tear. Mr. Fernandez impersonated the banished Duke as well as it is in the nature of Jaques's Boswell to be impersonated; Mr. H. B. Irving plays Oliver very much as anybody else would play Iago, yet with his faults on the right side; Mr. Vincent retains his lawful speeches (usually purloined by Jaques) as the First Lord; and Mr. Esmond tries the picturesque, attitudinizing, galvanic, Bedford Park style on Touchstone, worrying all effect out of the good lines, but worrying some into the bad ones. Mr. Wheeler, as Charles, catches the professional manner very happily; and the wrestling bout is far and away the best I have seen on the stage. To me, the wrestling is always the main attraction of an "As You Like It" performance, since it is so much easier to find a man who knows how to wrestle than one who knows how to act. Mr. Alexander's Orlando I should like to see again later on. The qualities he showed in it were those which go without saying in his case; and now that he has disposed of the really big achievement of producing the play with an artistic intelligence and a practical ability never, as far as my experience goes, applied to it before, he will have time to elaborate a part lying easily within his powers, and already very attractively played by him. There are ten other gentlemen in the cast; but I can only mention Mr. Aubrey Smith, whose appearance as "the humorous Duke" (which Mr. Vincent Sternroyd, as Le Beau, seemed to understand as a duke with a sense of humor, like Mr. Gilbert's Mikado) was so magnificent that it taxed all his powers to live up to his own aspect.

The scene where the two boys come in and sing "It was a lover and his lass" to Touchstone has been restored by Mr. Alexander with such success that I am

inclined to declare it the most delightful moment in the whole representation. Mr. Edward German has rearranged his "Henry VIII" music for the masque of Hymen at the end. Hymen, beauteous to gorgeousness, is impersonated by Miss Opp.

The production at this Christmas season could not be more timely. The children will find the virtue of Adam and the philosophy of Jaques just the thing for them; whilst their elders will be delighted by the pageantry and the wrestling.

IBSEN WITHOUT TEARS

12 December, 1896.

"LITTLE EYOLF," which began at the Avenue Theatre only the other day as an artistic forlorn hope led by Miss Elizabeth Robins, has been promoted into a full-blown fashionable theatrical speculation, with a "Morocco Bound" syndicate in the background, unlimited starring and bill-posting, and everything complete. The syndicate promptly set to work to show us how Ibsen should really be done. They found the whole thing wrong from the root up. The silly Ibsen people had put Miss Achurch, an Ibsenite actress, into the leading part, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, a fashionable actress, into a minor one. This was soon set right. Miss Achurch was got rid of altogether, and her part transferred to Mrs. Campbell. Miss Robins, though tainted with Ibsenism, was retained, but only, I presume, because, having command of the stage-right in the play, she could not be

replaced — say by Miss Maude Millett — without her own consent. The rest of the arrangements are economical rather than fashionable, the syndicate, to all appearance, being, like most syndicates, an association for the purpose of getting money rather than supplying it.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell has entered thoroughly into the spirit of the alterations. She has seen how unladylike, how disturbing, how full of horror even, the part of Rita Allmers is, acted as Miss Achurch acted it. And she has remedied this with a completeness that leaves nothing to be desired — or perhaps only one thing. Was there not a Mr. Arcedeckne who, when Thackeray took to lecturing, said, "Have a piano, Thack"? Well, Rita Allmers wants a piano. Mrs. Tanqueray had one, and played it so beautifully that I have been her infatuated slave ever since. There need be no difficulty about the matter: the breezy Borgheim has only to say, "Now that Alfred is back, Mrs. Allmers, won't you give us that study for the left hand we are all so fond of?" and there you are. However, even without the piano, Mrs. Campbell succeeded wonderfully in eliminating all unpleasantness from the play. She looked charming; and her dresses were beyond reproach: she carried a mortgage on the "gold and green forests" on her back. Her performance was infinitely reassuring and pretty: its note was, "You silly people: what are you making all this fuss about? The secret of life is charm and self-possession, and not tantrums about drowned children." The famous line "There stood your champagne; but you tasted it not," was no longer a "secret of the alcove," but a good-humored, mock petulant remonstrance with a man whom there was no pleasing in

the matter of wine. There was not a taste of nasty jealousy: this Rita tolerated her dear old stupid's preoccupation with Asta and Eyolf and his books as any sensible (or insensible) woman would. Goodness gracious, I thought, what things that evil-minded Miss Achurch did read into this harmless play! And how nicely Mrs. Campbell took the drowning of the child! Just a pretty waving of the fingers, a moderate scream as if she had very nearly walked on a tin tack, and it was all over, without tears, without pain, without more fuss than if she had broken the glass of her watch.

At this rate, it was not long before Rita thoroughly gained the sympathy of the audience. We felt that if she could only get rid of that ridiculous, sentimental Asta (Miss Robins, blind to the object lesson before her, persisted in acting Ibsenitically), and induce her fussing, self-conscious, probably underbred husband not to cry for spilt milk, she would be as happy as any lady in the land. Unfortunately, the behavior of Mr. Allmers became more and more intolerable as the second act progressed, though he could not exhaust Rita's patient, slily humorous tolerance. As usual, he wanted to know whether she would like to go and drown herself; and the sweet, cool way in which she answered, "Oh, I don't know, Alfred. No: I think I should have to stay here with *you* — a *litt*-le while" was a lesson to all wives. What a contrast to Miss Achurch, who so unnecessarily filled the stage with the terror of death in this passage! This is what comes of exaggeration, of over-acting, of forgetting that people go to the theatre to be amused, and not to be upset! When Allmers shook his fist at his beautiful wife — O unworthy the name of Briton! — and shouted "*You* are the guilty one in this," her silent dignity

overwhelmed him. Nothing could have been in better taste than her description of the pretty way in which her child had lain in the water when he was drowned — his mother's son all over. All the pain was taken out of it by the way it was approached. "I got Borgheim to go down to the pier with me [so nice of Borgheim, dear fellow!]." "And what," interrupts the stupid Allmers, "did you want there?" Rita gave a little laugh at his obtuseness, a laugh which meant "Why, you dear silly," before she replied, "To question the boys as to how it happened." After all, it is these Ibsenite people that create the objections to Ibsen. If Mrs. Campbell had played Rita from the first, not a word would have been said against the play; and the whole business would have been quietly over and the theatre closed by this time. But nothing would serve them but their Miss Achurch; and so, instead of a pretty arrangement of the "Eyolf" theme for boudoir pianette, we had it flung to the "Götterdämmerung" orchestra, and blared right into our shrinking souls.

In the third act, the smoothness of the proceedings was somewhat marred by the fact that Mrs. Campbell, not knowing her words, had to stop acting and frankly bring the book on the stage and read from it. Now Mrs. Campbell reads very clearly and nicely; and the result of course was that the Ibsenite atmosphere began to assert itself, just as it would if the play were read aloud in a private room. However, that has been remedied, no doubt, by this time; and the public may rely on an uninterruptedly quiet evening.

The main drawback is that it is impossible not to feel that Mrs. Campbell's Rita, with all her charm, is terribly hampered by the unsuitability of the words

Ibsen and Mr. Archer have put into her mouth. They were all very well for Miss Achurch, who perhaps, if the truth were known, arranged her acting to suit them; but they are forced, strained, out of tune in all sorts of ways in the mouth of Mrs. Campbell's latest creation. Why cannot the dialogue be adapted to her requirements and harmonized with her playing, say by Mr. William Black? Ibsen is of no use when anything really ladylike is wanted: you might as well put Beethoven to compose Chaminades. It is true that no man can look at the new Rita without wishing that Heaven had sent him just such a wife, whereas the boldest man would hardly have envied Allmers the other Rita if Miss Achurch had allowed him a moment's leisure for such impertinent speculations; but all the same, the evenings at the Avenue Theatre are likely to be a little languid. I had rather look at a beautiful picture than be flogged, as a general thing; but if I were offered my choice between looking at the most beautiful picture in the world continuously for a fortnight and submitting to, say, a dozen, I think I should choose the flogging. For just the same reason, if I had to choose between seeing Miss Achurch's Rita again, with all its turns of beauty and flashes of grandeur obliterated, and nothing left but its insane jealousy, its agonizing horror, its lacerating remorse, and its maddening unrest, the alternative being another two hours' contemplation of uneventful feminine fascination as personified by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, I should go like a lamb to the slaughter. I prefer Mrs. Campbell's Rita to her photograph, because it moves and talks; but otherwise there is not so much difference as I expected. Mrs. Campbell, as Magda, could do nothing with a public spoiled by Duse. I greatly

fear she will do even less, as Rita, with a public spoiled by Miss Achurch.

The representation generally is considerably affected in its scale and effect by the change of Ritas. Mr. Courtenay Thorpe, who, though playing *con tutta la forza*, could hardly avoid seeming to underact with Miss Achurch, has now considerable difficulty in avoiding overacting, since he cannot be even earnest and anxious without producing an effect of being good-humoredly laughed at by Mrs. Campbell. Miss Robins, as Asta, has improved greatly on the genteel misery of the first night. She has got complete hold of the part; and although her old fault of resorting to the lachrymose for all sorts of pathetic expression produces something of its old monotony, and the voice clings to one delicate register until the effect verges on affectation, yet Asta comes out as a distinct person about whose history the audience has learnt something, and not as an actress delivering a string of lines and making a number of points more or less effectively. The difficulty is that in this cheap edition of "Little Eyolf" Asta, instead of being the tranquillizing element, becomes the centre of disturbance; so that the conduct of Allmers in turning for the sake of piece and quietness from his pretty, coaxing, soothing wife to his agitated high-strung sister becomes nonsensical. I pointed out after the first performance that Miss Robins had not really succeeded in making Asta a peacemaker; but beside Miss Achurch she easily seemed gentle, whereas beside Mrs. Campbell she seems a volcano. It is only necessary to recall her playing of the frightful ending to the first act of "Alan's Wife," and compare it with Mrs. Campbell's finish to the first act of "Little Eyolf," to realize the preposterousness of their relative posi-

tions in the cast. Mrs. Campbell's old part of the Ratwife is now played by Miss Florence Farr. Miss Farr deserves more public sympathy than any of the other Ibsenite actresses; for they have only damaged themselves professionally by appearing in Ibsen's plays, whereas Miss Farr has complicated her difficulties by appearing in mine as well. Further, instead of either devoting herself to the most personally exacting of all the arts or else letting it alone, Miss Farr has written clever novels and erudite works on Babylonish lore; has managed a theatre capably for a season; and has only occasionally acted. For an occasional actress she has been rather successful once or twice in producing singular effects in singular parts — her Rebecca in "Rosmersholm" was remarkable and promising — but she has not pursued her art with sufficient constancy to attain any authoritative power of carrying out her conceptions, which are, besides, only skin deep. Her Ratwife is a favorable example of her power of producing a certain strangeness of effect; but it is somewhat discounted by want of sustained grip in the execution. Miss Farr will perhaps remedy this if she can find time enough to spare from her other interests to attend to it. The rest of the cast is as before. One has no longer any real belief in the drowning of Master Stewart Dawson, thanks to the gentle method of Mrs. Campbell. Mr. Lowne's sensible, healthy superiority to all this morbid Ibsen stuff is greatly reinforced now that Rita takes things nicely and easily.

I cannot help thinking it a great pity that the Avenue enterprise, just as it seemed to be capturing that afternoon classical concert public to which I have always looked for the regeneration of the classical drama,

should have paid the penalty of its success by the usual evolution into what is evidently half a timid speculation in a "catch-on," and half an attempt to slacken the rate at which the Avenue Theatre is eating its head off in rent. That evolution of course at once found out the utter incoherence of the enterprise. The original production, undertaken largely at Miss Robins's individual risk, was for the benefit of a vaguely announced Fund, as to the constitution and purpose of which no information was forthcoming, except that it proposed to produce Echegaray's "Mariana," with Miss Robins in the title-part. But neither Miss Robins's nor any one else's interests in this fund seem to have been secured in any way. The considerable profit of the first week of "Little Eyolf" may, for all that is guaranteed to the contrary, be devoted to the production of an opera, a shadow play from Paris, or a drama in which neither Miss Robins nor any of those who have worked with her may be offered any part or share whatever. There is already just such a fund in existence in the treasury of the Independent Theatre, which strove hard to obtain "Little Eyolf" for production, and which actually guaranteed part of the booking at the Avenue. But here the same difficulty arose. Miss Achurch would no doubt have trusted the Independent, for the excellent reason that her husband is one of the directors; but no other artist playing for it would have had the smallest security that, had its fortunes been established through their efforts, they would ever have been cast for a part in its future productions. On the other hand, Miss Achurch had no hold on the new fund, which had specially declared its intention of supporting Miss Robins. This has not prevented the production of "Little Eyolf," though it

has greatly delayed it; for everybody finally threw security to the winds, and played by friendly arrangement on such terms as were possible. As it happened, there was a substantial profit, and it all went to the Fund. Naturally, however, when the enterprise entered upon a purely commercial phase, the artists at once refused to work for the profit of a syndicate on the enthusiastic terms (or no terms) on which they had worked for Ibsen, and for one another. The syndicate, on the other hand, had no idea of wasting so expensive a star as Mrs. Patrick Campbell on a small part that could be filled for a few pounds, when they could transfer her to the leading part and save Miss Achurch's salary. If they could have substituted an inferior artist for Miss Robins, they could have effected a still further saving, relying on Mrs. Pat to draw full houses; but that was made impossible by Miss Robins's power over the stage-right. Consequently, the only sufferer was Miss Achurch; but it is impossible for Miss Robins and Mrs. Campbell not to feel that the same thing might have happened to them if there had been no stage-right, and if the syndicate had realized that, when it comes to Ibsen, Miss Achurch is a surer card to play than Mrs. Campbell.

Under these circumstances, what likelihood is there of the experiment being resumed or repeated on its old basis? Miss Robins will probably think twice before she creates Mariana without some security that, if she succeeds, the part will not immediately be handed over to Miss Winifred Emery or Miss Julia Neilson. Miss Achurch, triumphantly as she has come out of the comparison with her successor, is not likely to forget her lesson. Mrs. Campbell's willingness to enlist in forlorn hopes in the humblest capacity may not improbably be

received in future as Laocoon received the offer of the wooden horse. I do not presume to meddle in the affairs of all these actors and authors, patrons and enthusiasts, subscribers and guarantors, though this is quite as much my business as theirs; but after some years' intimate experience of the results of unorganized Ibsenism, I venture to suggest that it would be well to have some equitable form of theatrical organization ready to deal with Ibsen's new play, on the translation of which Mr. Archer is already at work.

RICHARD HIMSELF AGAIN

Richard III. Lyceum Theatre, 19 December, 1896.

THE world being yet little better than a mischievous schoolboy, I am afraid it cannot be denied that "Punch and Judy" holds the field still as the most popular of dramatic entertainments. And of all its versions, except those which are quite above the head of the man in the street, Shakespeare's "Richard III" is the best. It has abundant deviltry, humor, and character, presented with luxuriant energy of diction in the simplest form of blank verse. Shakespeare revels in it with just the sort of artistic unconscionableness that fits the theme. Richard is the prince of Punches; he delights Man by provoking God, and dies unrepentant and game to the last. His incongruous conventional appendages, such as the Punch hump, the conscience, the fear of ghosts, all impart a spice of outrageousness which leaves nothing lacking to the fun of the entertainment, except the solemnity of those

spectators who feel bound to take the affair as a profound and subtle historic study.

Punch, whether as Jingle, Macaire, Mephistopheles, or Richard, has always been a favorite part with Sir Henry Irving. The craftily mischievous, the sardonically impudent, tickle him immensely, besides providing him with a welcome relief from the gravity of his serious impersonations. As Richard he drops Punch after the coronation scene, which, in deference to stage tradition, he makes a turning-point at which the virtuoso in mischief, having achieved his ambition, becomes a savage at bay. I do not see why this should be. In the tent scene, Richard says:

> "There is no creature loves me;
> And if I die no soul will pity me."

Macbeth repeats this patch of pathos, and immediately proceeds to pity himself unstintedly over it; but Richard no sooner catches the sentimental cadence of his own voice than the mocker in him is awakened at once, and he adds, quite in Punch's vein,

> "Nay, wherefore should they? since that I myself
> Find in myself no pity for myself."

Sir Henry Irving omits these lines, because he plays, as he always does, for a pathetically sublime ending. But we have seen the sublime ending before pretty often; and this time it robs us of such strokes as Richard's aristocratically cynical private encouragement to his entourage of peers:

> "Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law.
> March on; join bravely; let us to 't pell-mell,
> If not to Heaven, then hand in hand to hell,"

followed by his amusingly blackguardly public address to the rank and file, quite in the vein of the famous and more successful appeal to the British troops in the Peninsula. "Will you that are Englishmen fed on beef let yourselves be licked like a lot of —— Spaniards fed on oranges?" Despair, one feels, could bring to Punch-Richard nothing but the exultation of one who loved destruction better than even victory; and the exclamation

> "A thousand hearts are great within my bosom"

is not the expression of a hero's courage, but the evil ecstasy of the destroyer as he finds himself, after a weak, piping time of peace, back at last in his native element.

Sir Henry Irving's acting edition of the play is so enormously superior to Cibber's, that a playgoer brought up, as I was, on the old version must needs find an overwhelming satisfaction in it. Not that I object to the particular lines which are now always flung in poor Cibber's face. "Off with his head: so much for Buckingham!" is just as worthy of Shakespeare as "I hear no more. Die, prophet, in thy speech," and distinctly better than "Off with his son George's head."

> "Hark! the shrill trumpet sounds. To horse! Away!
> My soul 's in arms, and eager for the fray"

is ridiculed because Cibber wrote it; but I cannot for the life of me see that it is inferior to

> "Go muster men. My counsel is my shield.
> We must be brief when traitors brave the field."

"Richard's himself again" is capital of its kind. If you object to that kind, the objection is stronger

against Shakespeare, who set Cibber the example, and was proclaimed immortal for it, than against an unfortunate actor who would never have dreamt of inventing the art of rhetorical balderdash for himself. The plain reason why the public for so many generations could see no difference in merit between the famous Cibber points and

"A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!"

was that there was no difference to see. When it came to fustian, Jack was as good as his master.

The real objection to Cibber's version is that it is what we call a "one man show." Shakespeare, having no room in a play so full of action for more than one real part, surrounded it with figures whose historic titles and splendid dresses, helped by a line or two at the right moment, impose on our imagination sufficiently to make us see the whole Court of Edward IV. If Hastings, Stanley, the "jockey of Norfolk," the "deep revolving witty Buckingham," and the rest, only bear themselves with sufficient address not to absolutely contradict the dramatist's suggestion of them, the audience will receive enough impression of their reality, and even of their importance, to give Richard an air of moving in a Court as the King's brother. But Cibber could not bear that any one on the stage should have an air of importance except himself: if the subordinate members of the company could not act so well as he, it seemed to him, not that it was his business as the presenter of a play to conceal their deficiencies, but that the first principles of justice and fair dealing demanded before all things that his superiority should be made evident to the public. (And there are not half a dozen leading actors on the stage to-day who would

not take precisely that view of the situation.) Consequently he handled "Richard III" so as to make every other actor in it obviously ridiculous and insignificant, except only that Henry VI, in the first act, was allowed to win the pity of the audience in order that the effect might be the greater when Richard stabbed him. No actor could have produced more completely, exactly, and forcibly the effect aimed at by Cibber than Barry Sullivan, the one actor who kept Cibber's Richard on the stage during the present half-century. But it was an exhibition, not a play. Barry Sullivan was full of force, and very clever: if his powers had been less exclusively of the infernal order, or if he had devoted himself to the drama instead of devoting the drama to himself as a mere means of self-assertion, one might have said more for him. He managed to make the audience believe in Richard; but as he could not make it believe in the others, and probably did not want to, they destroyed the illusion almost as fast as he created it. This is why Cibber's Richard, though it is so simple that the character plays itself as unmistakably as the blank verse speaks itself, can only be made endurable by an actor of exceptional personal force. The second and third acts at the Lyceum, with their atmosphere of Court faction and their presentation before the audience of Edward and Clarence, make all the difference between the two versions.

But the Lyceum has by no means emancipated itself from superstition — even gross superstition. Italian opera itself could go no further in folly than the exhibition of a pretty and popular young actress in tights as Prince Edward. No doubt we were glad to see Miss Lena Ashwell — for the matter of that we should have been glad to see Mrs. John Wood as the other

prince — but from the moment she came on the stage all serious historical illusion necessarily vanished, and was replaced by the most extreme form of theatrical convention. Probably Sir Henry Irving cast Miss Ashwell for the part because he has not followed her career since she played Elaine in "King Arthur." She was then weak, timid, subordinate, with an insignificant presence and a voice which, contrasted as it was with Miss Terry's, could only be described — if one had the heart to do it — as a squawl. Since then she has developed precipitously. If any sort of success had been possible for the plays in which she has appeared this year at the Duke of York's and Shaftesbury Theatres, she would have received a large share of the credit of it. Even in "Carmen," when, perhaps for the sake of auld lang syne, she squawled and stood on the tips of her heels for the last time (let us hope), her scene with the dragoon in the first act was the one memorable moment in the whole of that disastrous business. She now returns to the Lyceum stage as an actress of mark, strong in womanly charm, and not in the least the sort of person whose sex is so little emphasized that it can be hidden by a doublet and hose. You might as well put forward Miss Ada Rehan as a boy. Nothing can be more absurd than the spectacle of Sir Henry Irving elaborately playing the uncle to his little nephew when he is obviously addressing a fine young woman in rational dress who is very thoroughly her own mistress, and treads the boards with no little authority and assurance as one of the younger generation knocking vigorously at the door. Miss Ashwell makes short work of the sleepiness of the Lyceum; and though I take urgent exception to her latest technical theory, which is, that the bridge of the nose is

the seat of facial expression, I admit that she does all that can be done to reconcile us to the burlesque of her appearance in a part that should have been played by a boy.

Another mistake in the casting of the play was Mr. Gordon Craig's Edward IV. As Henry VI, Mr. Craig, who wasted his delicacy on the wrong part, would have been perfect. Henry not being available, he might have played Richmond with a considerable air of being a young Henry VII. But as Edward he was incredible: one felt that Richard would have had him out of the way years ago if Margaret had not saved him the trouble by vanquishing him at Tewkesbury. Shakespeare took plenty of pains with the strong ruffian of the York family: his part in "Henry VI" makes it quite clear why he held his own both in and out of doors. The remedy for the misfit lay ready to the manager's hand. Mr. Cooper, his too burly Richmond, showed what a capital Edward he would have made when he turned at the entrance to his tent, and said, with the set air of a man not accustomed to be trifled with,

> "O Thou, whose captain I account myself,
> Look on my forces with a gracious eye,
> Or you will have me to reckon with afterwards."

The last line was not actually spoken by Mr. Cooper; but he looked it, exactly as Edward IV might have done.

As to Sir Henry Irving's own performance, I am not prepared to judge it, in point of execution, by what he did on the first night. He was best in the Court scenes. In the heavy single-handed scenes which Cibber loved, he was not, as it seemed to me, answering his helm satisfactorily; and he was occasionally a

little out of temper with his own nervous condition. He made some odd slips in the text, notably by repeatedly substituting "you" for "I" — for instance, "Shine out, fair sun, till you have bought a glass." Once he inadvertently electrified the house by very unexpectedly asking Miss Milton to get further up the stage in the blank verse and penetrating tones of Richard. Finally, the worry of playing against the vein tired him. In the tent and battle scenes his exhaustion was too genuine to be quite acceptable as part of the play. The fight was, perhaps, a relief to his feelings; but to me the spectacle of Mr. Cooper pretending to pass his sword three times through Richard's body, as if a man could be run through as easily as a cuttle-fish, was neither credible nor impressive. The attempt to make a stage combat look as imposing as Hazlitt's description of the death of Edmund Kean's Richard reads, is hopeless. If Kean were to return to life and do the combat for us, we should very likely find it as absurd as his habit of lying down on a sofa when he was too tired or too drunk to keep his feet during the final scenes.

Further, it seems to me that Sir Henry Irving should either cast the play to suit his acting or else modify his acting to suit the cast. His playing, in the scene with Lady Anne — which, though a Punch scene, is Punch on the "Don Giovanni" plane — was a flat contradiction, not only of the letter of the lines, but of their spirit and feeling as conveyed unmistakably by their cadence. This, however, we are used to: Sir Henry Irving never did and never will make use of a play otherwise than as a vehicle for some fantastic creation of his own. But if we are not to have the tears, the passion, the tenderness, the transport of

dissimulation which alone can make the upshot credible — if the woman is to be openly teased and insulted, mocked, and disgusted, all through the scene as well as in the first "keen encounter of their wits," why not have Lady Anne presented as a weak, childish-witted, mesmerized creature, instead of as that most awful embodiment of virtue and decorum, the intellectual American lady? Poor Miss Julia Arthur honestly did her best to act the part as she found it in Shakespeare; and if Richard had done the same she would have come off with credit. But how could she play to a Richard who would not utter a single tone to which any woman's heart could respond? She could not very well box the actor-manager's ears, and walk off; but really she deserves some credit for refraining from that extreme remedy. She partly had her revenge when she left the stage; for Richard, after playing the scene with her as if he were a Hounsditch salesman cheating a factory girl over a pair of second-hand stockings, naturally could not reach the raptures of the tremendous outburst of elation beginning

> "Was ever woman in this humor wooed?
> Was ever woman in this humor won?"

One felt inclined to answer, "Never, I assure you," and make an end of the scene there and then. I am prepared to admit that the creations of Sir Henry Irving's imagination are sometimes — in the case of his Iachimo, for example — better than those of the dramatists whom he is supposed to interpret. But what he did in this scene, as well as in the opening soliloquy, was child's play compared to what Shakespeare meant him to do.

The rest of the performance was — well, it was

Lyceum Shakespeare. Miss Genevieve Ward was, of course, a very capable Margaret; but she missed the one touchstone passage in a very easy part — the tenderness of the appeal to Buckingham. Mr. Macklin, equally of course, had no trouble with Buckingham; but he did not give us that moment which makes Richard say:

> "None are for me
> That look into me with considerate eyes."

Messrs. Norman Forbes and W. Farren (junior) played the murderers in the true Shakespearean manner: that is, as if they had come straight out of the pantomime of "The Babes in the Wood"; and Clarence recited his dream as if he were an elocutionary coroner summing up. The rest were respectably dull, except Mr. Gordon Craig, Miss Lena Ashwell, and, in a page's part, Miss Edith Craig, the only member of the company before whom the manager visibly quails.

BETTER THAN SHAKESPEARE

The Pilgrim's Progress: a mystery play, with music, in four acts, by G. G. Collingham; founded on John Bunyan's immortal allegory. Olympic Theatre, 24 December, 1896.

WHEN I saw a stage version of "The Pilgrim's Progress" announced for production, I shook my head, knowing that Bunyan is far too great a dramatist for our theatre, which has never been resolute enough even in its lewdness and venality,

to win the respect and interest which positive, powerful wickedness always engages, much less the services of men of heroic conviction. Its greatest catch, Shakespeare, wrote for the theatre because, with extraordinary artistic powers, he understood nothing and believed nothing. Thirty-six big plays in five blank verse acts, and (as Mr. Ruskin, I think, once pointed out) not a single hero! Only one man in them all who believes in life, enjoys life, thinks life worth living, and has a sincere, unrhetorical tear dropped over his deathbed, and that man — Falstaff! What a crew they are — these Saturday to Monday athletic stockbroker Orlandos, these villains, fools, clowns, drunkards, cowards, intriguers, fighters, lovers, patriots, hypochondriacs who mistake themselves (and are mistaken by the author) for philosophers, princes without any sense of public duty, futile pessimists who imagine they are confronting a barren and unmeaning world when they are only contemplating their own worthlessness, self-seekers of all kinds, keenly observed and masterfully drawn from the romantic-commercial point of view. Once or twice we scent among them an anticipation of the crudest side of Ibsen's polemics on the Woman Question, as in "All 's Well that Ends Well," where the man cuts as meanly selfish a figure beside his enlightened lady doctor wife as Helmer beside Nora; or in "Cymbeline," where Posthumus, having, as he believes, killed his wife for inconstancy, speculates for a moment on what his life would have been worth if the same standard of continence had been applied to himself. And certainly no modern study of the voluptuous temperament, and the spurious heroism and heroinism which its ecstasies produce, can add much to "Antony and Cleopatra," unless it were some sense of the

spuriousness on the author's part. But search for statesmanship, or even citizenship, or any sense of the commonwealth, material or spiritual, and you will not find the making of a decent vestryman or curate in the whole horde. As to faith, hope, courage, conviction, or any of the true heroic qualities, you find nothing but death made sensational, despair made stage-sublime, sex made romantic, and barrenness covered up by sentimentality and the mechanical lilt of blank verse.

All that you miss in Shakespeare you find in Bunyan, to whom the true heroic came quite obviously and naturally. The world was to him a more terrible place than it was to Shakespeare; but he saw through it a path at the end of which a man might look not only forward to the Celestial City, but back on his life and say: "Tho' with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get them." The heart vibrates like a bell to such an utterance as this: to turn from it to "Out, out, brief candle," and "The rest is silence," and "We are such stuff as dreams are made on; and our little life is rounded by a sleep" is to turn from life, strength, resolution, morning air and eternal youth, to the terrors of a drunken nightmare.

Let us descend now to the lower ground where Shakespeare is not disabled by this inferiority in energy and elevation of spirit. Take one of his big fighting scenes, and compare its blank verse, in point of mere rhetorical strenuousness, with Bunyan's prose. Macbeth's famous cure for the fight with Macduff runs thus:

> "Yet I will try the last: before my body
> I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,
> And damned be him that first cries Hold, enough!"

Turn from this jingle, dramatically right in feeling, but silly and resourceless in thought and expression, to Apollyon's cue for the fight in the Valley of Humiliation: "I am void of fear in this matter. Prepare thyself to die; for I swear by my infernal den that thou shalt go no farther: here will I spill thy soul." This is the same thing done masterly. Apart from its superior grandeur, force, and appropriateness, it is better clap-trap and infinitely better word-music.

Shakespeare, fond as he is of describing fights, has hardly ever sufficient energy or reality of imagination to finish without betraying the paper origin of his fancies by dragging in something classical in the style of the Cyclops' hammer falling "On Mars' armor, forged for proof eterne." Hear how Bunyan does it: "I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand; and when they were joined together as if the sword grew out of my arm; and when the blood run thorow my fingers, then I fought with most courage." Nowhere in all Shakespeare is there a touch like that of the blood running down through the man's fingers, and his courage rising to passion at it. Even in mere technical adaptation to the art of the actor, Bunyan's dramatic speeches are as good as Shakespeare's tirades. Only a trained dramatic speaker can appreciate the terse manageableness and effectiveness of such a speech as this, with its grandiose exordium, followed up by its pointed question and its stern threat: "By this I perceive thou art one of my subjects; for all that country is mine, and I am the Prince and the God of it. How

is it then that thou hast ran away from thy King? Were it not that I hope thou mayst do me more service, I would strike thee now at one blow to the ground." Here there is no raving and swearing and rhyming and classical allusion. The sentences go straight to their mark; and their concluding phrases soar like the sunrise, or swing and drop like a hammer, just as the actor wants them.

I might multiply these instances by the dozen; but I had rather leave dramatic students to compare the two authors at first-hand. In an article on Bunyan lately published in the "Contemporary Review" — the only article worth reading on the subject I ever saw (yes, thank you; I am quite familiar with Macaulay's patronizing prattle about "The Pilgrim's Progress") — Mr. Richard Heath, the historian of the Anabaptists, shows how Bunyan learnt his lesson, not only from his own rough pilgrimage through life, but from the tradition of many an actual journey from real Cities of Destruction (under Alva), with Interpreters' houses and convey of Great-hearts all complete. Against such a man what chance had our poor immortal William, with his "little Latin" (would it had been less, like his Greek!), his heathen mythology, his Plutarch, his Boccaccio, his Holinshed, his circle of London literary wits, soddening their minds with books and their nerves with alcohol (quite like us), and all the rest of his Strand and Fleet Street surroundings, activities, and interests, social and professional, mentionable and unmentionable? Let us applaud him, in due measure, in that he came out of it no blackguardly Bohemian, but a thoroughly respectable snob; raised the desperation and cynicism of its outlook to something like sublimity in his tragedies; dramatized its

morbid, self-centred passions and its feeble and shallow speculations with all the force that was in them; disinfected it by copious doses of romantic poetry, fun, and common sense; and gave to its perpetual sex-obsession the relief of individual character and feminine winsomeness. Also — if you are a sufficiently good Whig — that after incarnating the spirit of the whole epoch which began with the sixteenth century and is ending (I hope) with the nineteenth, he is still the idol of all well-read children. But as he never thought a noble life worth living or a great work worth doing, because the commercial profit-and-loss sheet showed that the one did not bring happiness nor the other money, he never struck the great vein — the vein in which Bunyan told of that "man of a very stout countenance" who went up to the keeper of the book of life and said, not "Out, out, brief candle," but "Set down my name, sir," and immediately fell on the armed men and cut his way into heaven after receiving and giving many wounds.

SATAN SAVED AT LAST

The Sorrows of Satan: a play in four acts. Adapted by Herbert Woodgate and Paul M. Berton from the famous novel of that name, by Marie Corelli. Shaftesbury Theatre, 9 January, 1897.

I WISH this invertebrate generation would make up its mind either to believe in the devil or disbelieve in him. The Norwegians, we learn from Ibsen's Brand, prefer an easygoing God, whom they can get round, and who does not mean half what he says when

he is angry. I have always thought that there is a good deal to be said for this amiable theology; but when it comes to the devil, I claim, like Brand, "all or nothing." A snivelling, remorseful devil, with his heart in the right place, sneaking about the area railings of heaven in the hope that he will presently be let in and forgiven, is an abomination to me. The Lean Person in "Peer Gynt," whose occupation was gone because men sinned so half-heartedly that nobody was worth damning, gained my sympathy at once. But a devil who is himself half-hearted — whose feud with heaven is the silliest sort of lover's quarrel — who believes that he is in the wrong and God in the right — pah! He reminds me of those Sunday School teachers who cannot keep from drinking and gambling, though they believe in teetotalism and long to be the most respectable men in the parish. I cannot conceive how such a creature can charm the imagination of Miss Marie Corelli. It will be admitted that she is not easy to please when fashionable women and journalists are in question. Then why let the devil off so cheaply?

Let me not, however, dismiss "The Sorrows of Satan" too cavalierly; for I take Miss Marie Corelli to be one of the most sincere and independent writers at present before the public. Early in 1886, when she made her mark for the first time with "A Romance of Two Worlds," she took her stand boldly as the apostle of romantic religion. "Believe," she said, "in anything or everything miraculous and glorious — the utmost reach of your faith can with difficulty grasp the majestic reality and perfection of everything you can see, desire, or imagine." Here we have that sure mark of romantic religion — the glorification of the

miraculous. Again, "walking on the sea can be accomplished now by any one who has cultivated sufficient inner force." Two years later, "A Romance of Two Worlds" was prefaced by a list of testimonials from persons who had found salvation in the "Electric Christianity" of the novel. Lest any one should suppose that "Electric Christianity" was a fictitious religion, Miss Corelli took the opportunity to say of it, "Its tenets are completely borne out by the New Testament, which sacred *little book* [italics mine], however, has much of its mystical and true meaning obscured nowadays through the indifference of those who read and the apathy of those who hear. . . . My creed has its foundation in Christ alone . . . only Christ, only the old old story of Divine love and sacrifice. . . . The proof of the theories set forth in the Romance is, as I have stated, easily to be found in the New Testament. . . . I merely endeavored to slightly shadow forth the miraculous powers which I *know* are bestowed on those who truly love and understand the teachings of Christ." The miraculous powers, I may mention, included making trips round the solar system, living for ever, seeming to improvise on the pianoforte by playing at the dictation of angels, knocking people down with electric shocks at will and without apparatus, painting pictures in luminous paint, and cognate marvels. When I say that Miss Corelli is sincere, I of course do not mean that she has ever acted on the assumption that her "religion" is real. But when she takes up her pen, she imagines it to be real, because she has a prodigiously copious and fluent imagination, without, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the knowledge, the training, the observation, the critical faculty, the humor, or any other of the acquirements

and qualities which compel ordinary people to distinguish in some measure (and in some measure only; for the best of us is not wholly un-Corellian) between what they may sanely believe and what they would like to believe. Great works in fiction are the arduous victories of great minds over great imaginations: Miss Corelli's works are the cheap victories of a profuse imagination over an apparently commonplace and carelessly cultivated mind. The story of the Passion in the New Testament not being imaginative enough for her, and quite superfluously thoughtful and realistic, she rewrote it to her taste; and the huge circulation of her version shows that, to the minds of her readers, she considerably improved it. Having made this success with the hero of "Barabbas," she next turned her attention to Satan, taking all the meaning out of him, but lavishing imagination on him until he shone all over with stage fire. I do not complain of the process: I neither grudge Miss Corelli to her disciples nor her disciples to Miss Corelli; but I must warn my readers that nothing that I have to say about the play must be taken as implying that it is possible, real, or philosophically coherent.

Let me now come down from my high horse, and take the play on its own ground. The romantic imagination is the most unoriginative, uncreative faculty in the world, an original romance being simply an old situation shown from a new point of view. As John Gabriel Borkman says, "the eye, born anew, transforms the old action." Miss Corelli's eye, not having been born anew, transforms nothing. Only, it was born recently enough to have fallen on the music dramas of Wagner; and just as she gave us, in "Thelma," a version of the scene in "Die Walküre" where Brynhild warns Sieg-

mund of his approaching death, so in "The Sorrows of Satan" she reproduces Vanderdecken, the man whose sentence of damnation will be cancelled if he can find one soul faithful to the death. Wagner's Vanderdecken is redeemed by a woman; but Miss Corelli, belonging to that sex herself, knows better, and makes the redeemer a man. I am bound to say that after the most attentive study of the performance I am unable to report the logical connection between the drowning of Geoffrey Tempest in the shipwreck of Satan-Vanderdecken-Rimanez's yacht in the Antarctic circle, and the immediate ascension to heaven of Satan in a suit of armor; but I have no doubt it is explained in the novel: at all events, the situation at the end of the "Flying Dutchman," with the ship sinking, and the redeemed man rising from the sea in glory, is quite recognizable. It seems hard that Geoffrey Tempest should be left in the cold water; but the spectacle of Satan ascending in the fifteenth-century splendor, with his arm round a gentleman in shirt and trousers, evidently would not do; so poetic justice has to be sacrificed to stage effect.

The most forcible scene in the play is that in the fourth act, where the villain of the piece, Lady Sybil, plays false to her trusting husband by trying to seduce the virtuous demon. In an ordinary man-made play the villain would be a man and the sympathetic personages women; but as "The Sorrows of Satan" are woman-made, the sexes are reversed. This novelty is heightened by the operatic culture of the author, which enables her to blend the extremity of modern fashionableness with the extremity of mediæval superstition, in the assured foreknowledge that the public will not only stand it but like it. All the essentials of the

church scene from Gounod's "Faust" are in that fourth act, with even some of the accessories — the organ, for instance. The scene succeeds, as certain other scraps of the play succeed, because Miss Corelli has the courage and intensity of her imagination. This does not, of course, save her from absurdity — indeed it rather tends to involve her in it — but absurdity is the one thing that does not matter on the stage, provided it is not psychological absurdity. Still, a dramatist had better not abuse his immunity from common sense. It is true that if a man goes into the National Gallery, and raises the objection that all these pretended figures and landscapes and interiors are nothing but canvas and colored clay, there is nothing for it but to conduct him to the entrance and shoot him gently over the balustrade into the prosaic street. All the same, the more completely a painter can make us overlook that objection the better. Miss Corelli is apt to forget this. The introduction of a devil in footman's livery passed off excellently; but when he subsequently turned his hand to steering the yacht, and adopted a cardinal's costume as the most convenient for that duty, I confess I began to realize what a chance the management lost in not securing Mr. Harry Nicholls for that part. The young nobleman who played baccarat so prodigally did not shatter my illusions until he suddenly staked his soul, at which point I missed Meyerbeer's "Robert le Diable" music rather badly. On the other hand, I have no objection whatever to Satan, after elaborately disguising himself as a modern *chevalier d'industrie*, giving himself away by occasional flashes of lightning. Without them the audience would not know that he was the devil: besides, it reminds one of Edmund Kean.

These, however, are trifles: any play can be ridiculed by simply refusing to accept its descriptive conventions. But, as I have said, a play need not be morally absurd. Real life, in spite of the efforts of States, Churches, and individuals to reduce its haphazards to order, *is* morally absurd for the most part: Prometheus gains but little on Jupiter; and his defeats are the staple of tragedy. It is the privilege of the drama to make life intelligible, at least hypothetically, by introducing moral design into it, even if that design be only to show that moral design is an illusion, a demonstration which cannot be made without some counter-demonstration of the laws of life with which it clashes. If the dramatist repudiates moral interest, and elects to depend on humor, sensuousness and romance, all the more must he accept the moral conventions which have become normal on the stage. Now Miss Corelli has flatly no humor — positively none at all. She is, in a very bookish way, abundantly sensuous and romantic; but she vehemently repudiates the conventional moral basis, professing, for instance, a loathing for the normal course of fashionable society, with its marriage market, its spiritual callousness, and its hunt for pleasure and money. But if Miss Corelli did not herself live in the idlest of all worlds, the world of dreams and books (so idle that people do not even learn to ride and shoot and sin in it), she would know that it is vain to protest against a necessary institution, however corrupt, until you have an efficient and convincing substitute ready. "Electric Christianity" (symbolized in the play by Satan's flashes of lightning) will not convince anybody with a reasonably hard head on his or her shoulders that it is an efficient substitute even for the morals of Mayfair. The play is morally

absurd from beginning to end. Satan is represented, not as the enemy of God, but as his victim and moral superior: nevertheless he worships God and is rewarded by reconciliation with him. He is neither Lucifer nor Prometheus, but a sham revolutionist bidding for a seat in the Cabinet. Lady Sybil is stigmatized as a "wanton" because she marries for money; but the man who buys her in the marriage market quite openly by offering to take "The Hall, Willowsmere," if she will marry him, as a set-off to the disagreeableness of living with a man she does not care for, not only passes without reproach, and is permitted to strike virtuous attitudes at her expense, but actually has his death accepted as a sufficient atonement to redeem the devil. Please observe that he is thereby placed above Christ, whose atonement and resistance to the temptation in the desert were ineffectual as far as Satan was concerned. At the same time we are permitted to take to our bosoms an American girl, because, to gratify her Poppa's love of a title without forfeiting her own self-respect, she has heroically refused a silly young Duke and married a venal old Earl. Further, the parade of contempt for wealth and fashion is accompanied by the rigid exclusion of all second-class, poor or lowly persons from the play except in the capacity of servants. The male characters are a Prince, a millionaire, an Earl, a Viscount, a Duke, and a Baronet, with their servants, two caricatured solicitors and a publisher being introduced for a moment to be laughed at for their vulgarity. The feminine side is supplied by Lady Sybil, Lady Mary, Miss Charlotte Fitzroy (who, lest her name should fail to inspire awe, is carefully introduced as "Lord Elton's sister-in-law"), a millionairess, a Duchess, one vulgar but only momen-

tary landlady, and Mavis Clare. Mavis Clare might be Miss Corelli herself, so haughtily does she scorn the minions of fashion and worms of the hour (as Silas Wegg put it) who provide her with the only society she seems to care for.

The adaptation from Miss Corelli's novel has been made by Messrs. Herbert Woodgate and Paul Berton. I nevertheless hold Miss Corelli responsible for it. She is quite as capable of dramatizing her novels as any one who is likely to save her the trouble; and a little work in this direction would do her no harm. A good deal of the dialogue is redundant, slovenly, and full of reach-me-down phrases which vulgarize every scene in which the author has not been stirred up by strong feeling. Most of the critics of whose hostility Miss Corelli complains so bitterly could teach her to double the distinction of her style in ten lessons. No doubt she could return the compliment by elevating their imaginations; so the lessons could be arranged on reciprocal terms.

The play has not called forth any great display of acting at the Shaftesbury. Mr. Lewis Waller, by a touch or two on his eyebrows, makes himself passably like the famous devil on the roof of Notre Dame, and keeps up appearances so well that he appears to be talking impressively and cleverly even when he is observing at a garden party that "the man who pretends to understand women betrays the first symptoms of insanity." Mr. Yorke Stephens, with unquenchable politeness and unassailable style, fulfils his obligations to Miss Corelli and the audience most scrupulously, but with the air of a man who has resolved to shoot himself the moment the curtain is down. He lacks that priceless gift of stupidity which prevents most leading

men from knowing a bad part from a good one; and so, though he plays Geoffrey Tempest expertly, he cannot wallow in him as a worse actor might. His address never fails him; but as he is essentially a sceptical actor, his function of the Redeemer of Satan does not seem to impress him; and there is a remarkably reassuring ring in his "O Lucio, Lucio, my heart is broken!" Miss Granville would do very well as Lady Sybil if only she were trained hard enough to get the requisite force of execution and to maintain her grip firmly all through. As it is, she hardly gets beyond a string of creditable attempts to act. The other parts are of no great importance.

There is a play without words at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, entitled "A Pierrot's Dream," about which I have more to say than there is room for this week. Meanwhile I may admit that I found it a very delectable entertainment, Mlle. Fitini's Pierrot having a quite peculiar charm in addition to the accomplishments which one expects as a matter of course from Pierrots. Rossi's Pochinet, in a rougher way, is also excellent.

THE NEW IBSEN PLAY

John Gabriel Borkman: a play in four acts. By Henrik Ibsen. Translated by William Archer. London: Heinemann. 1897.

THE appearance some weeks ago in these columns of a review of the original Norwegian edition of Ibsen's new play, "John Gabriel Borkman," relieves me from repeating here what I have said elsewhere concerning Mr. William Archer's English version. In fact, the time for reviewing it has gone by: all who care about Ibsen have by this time pounced on the new volume, and ascertained for themselves what it is like. The only point worth discussing now is the play's chances of performance.

Everybody knows what happened to "Little Eyolf." None of our managers would touch it; and it was not until the situation was made very pressing indeed by the advent of the proof-sheets of its successor that it was produced. As it happened, a certain section of the public — much the same section, I take it, as that which supplies the audiences for our orchestral concerts — jumped at the opportunity; and the experiment, in its original modesty, proved handsomely remunerative. Then commercial enterprise, always dreaming of "catches-on," long runs, and "silver mines," attempted to exploit the occasion in the usual way, and of course made an inglorious mess of it. A fashionable run of one of Ibsen's dramatic studies of modern society is about as feasible as a fashionable run of Beethoven's posthumous quartets. A late Ibsen play will not bring in twenty thousand pounds: it will only bring in fif-

teen hundred or two thousand. On the other hand, the play which *may* bring in twenty thousand pounds also may, and in nine cases out of ten does, bring in less than half its very heavy expenses; whereas the expenses of an Ibsen play, including a rate of profit for the entrepreneur which would be considered handsome in any ordinary non-speculative business, can be kept well within its practically certain returns, not to mention a high degree of artistic credit and satisfaction to all concerned. Under these circumstances it can hardly be contended that Ibsen's plays are not worth producing. In legitimate theatrical business Ibsen is as safe and profitable as Beethoven and Wagner in legitimate musical business.

Then, it will be asked, why do not the syndicates and managers take up Ibsen? As to the syndicates, the answer is simple. Enterprises with prospects limited to a profit of a few hundred pounds on a capital of a thousand do not require syndicates to finance them. An energetic individual enthusiast and a subscription can get over the business difficulties. The formation of a wealthy syndicate to produce a "Little Eyolf" would be like the promotion of a joint-stock company to sweep a crossing. As to the managers, there are various reasons. First, there is the inevitable snobbery of the fashionable actor-manager's position, which makes him ashamed to produce a play without spending more on the stage mounting alone than an Ibsen play will bring in. Second, our managers, having for the most part only a dealer's knowledge of art, cannot appreciate a new line of goods.

It is clear that the first objection will have to be got over somehow. If every manager considers it due to himself to produce nothing cheaper than "The Pris-

oner of Zenda," not to mention the splendors of the Lyceum, then good-bye to high dramatic art. The managers will, perhaps, retort that if high dramatic art means Ibsen, then they ask for nothing better than to get rid of it. I am too polite to reply, bluntly, that high dramatic art *does* mean Ibsen; that Ibsen's plays are at this moment the head of the dramatic body; and that though an actor-manager can, and often does, do without a head, dramatic art cannot. Already Ibsen is a European power: this new play has been awaited for two years, and is now being discussed and assimilated into the consciousness of the age with an interest which no political or pontifical utterance can command. Wagner himself did not attain such a position during his lifetime, because he was regarded merely as a musician — much the same thing as regarding Shakespeare merely as a grammarian. Ibsen is translated promptly enough nowadays; yet no matter how rapidly the translation comes on the heel of the original, newspapers cannot wait for it: detailed accounts based on the Norwegian text, and even on stolen glimpses of the proof-sheets, fly through the world from column to column as if the play were an Anglo-American arbitration treaty. Sometimes a foolish actor informs the public that Ibsen is a noisome nuisance. The public instantly loses whatever respect it may previously have had, not only for that foolish actor's critical opinion, but for his good sense. But if Ibsen were to visit London, and express his opinion of our English theatre — as Wagner expressed his opinion of the Philharmonic Society, for example — our actors and managers would go down to posterity as exactly such persons as Ibsen described them. He is master of the situation, this man of genius; and

when we complain that he does not share our trumpery little notions of life and society; that the themes that make us whine and wince have no terrors for him, but infinite interest; and that he is far above the barmaid's and shop superintendent's obligation to be agreeable to Tom, Dick and Harry (which naturally convinces Tom, Dick and Harry that he is no gentleman), we are not making out a case against him, but simply stating the grounds of his eminence. When any person objects to an Ibsen play because it does not hold the mirror up to his own mind, I can only remind him that a horse might make exactly the same objection. For my own part, I do not endorse all Ibsen's views: I even prefer my own plays to his in some respects; but I hope I know a great man from a little one as far as my comprehension of such things goes. Criticism may be pardoned for every mistake except that of not knowing a man of rank in literature when it meets one.

It is quite evident, then, that Ibsen can do without the managers. There remains the question: Can they do without Ibsen? And it is certainly astounding how long English stupidity can stave off foreign genius. It took Mozart's "Don Giovanni," the greatest opera in the world, guaranteed by contemporary critics to be void of melody and overwhelmed with noisy orchestration, thirty years to reach London; and Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" made its way last year into the repertory of our Royal Italian Opera thirty-eight years after its composition. But even at this moderate rate of progress Ibsen may be regarded as fairly due by this time. The play which stands out among his works as an ideal Lyceum piece, "The Pretenders," was his tenth play; and yet it was written thirty-four

years ago. "Peer Gynt" is over thirty. Why, even "A Doll's House" is eighteen years old. These figures are significant, because there is an enormous difference between the effect of Ibsen's ideas on his own contemporaries and on those who might be his sons and grandsons. Take my own case. I am a middle-aged, old-fashioned person. But I was only two years old when "The Vikings at Helgeland" was written. Now, considering that "Little Eyolf," written only a couple of years ago, already attracts an audience sufficiently numerous to pay for its production with a handsome little profit, is it to be believed that playgoers from ten to twenty years younger than I am are not yet ready for at least the great spectacular dramas, charged with romantic grandeur and religious sentiment, which Ibsen wrote between 1855 (the date of "Lady Inger") and 1866 (the date of "Peer Gynt")?

But alas! our managers are older in their ideas than Ibsen's grandmother. It is Sir Henry Irving's business, as the official head of his profession — *tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin* — to keep before us the noble side of that movement in dramatic art of which "The Sign of the Cross" and "The Sorrows of Satan" are the cheap and popular manifestations. But how can he bring his transfigurations and fantasies to bear on the realities of the modern school? They have no more to do with Ibsen than with Shakespeare or any other author save only Henry Irving himself. His theatre is not really a theatre at all: an accident has just demonstrated that nobody will go there to see a play, especially a play by Shakespeare! They go only to see Sir Henry Irving or Miss Ellen Terry. When he sprains his knee and Miss Terry flies south, leaving only Shakespeare and the Lyceum company — O that

company! — in possession, the theatre becomes a desert: Shakespeare will not pay for gas enough to see him by. Back comes Miss Terry; up goes Shakespeare, Wills, Sardou, anybody; the public rallies; and by the time the sprain is cured, all will be well. No: the Lyceum is incorrigible: its debt to modern dramatic art is now too far in arrear ever to be paid. After all, why, after inventing a distinct *genre* of art, and an undeniably fascinating one at that, should Sir Henry Irving now place himself at the disposition of Ibsen, and become the Exponent of Another on the stage which he has hitherto trodden as the Self-Expounded? Why should Miss Terry, whom we have adored under all sorts of delicious, nonsensical disguises, loving especially those which made her most herself, turn mere actress, and be transformed by Norwegian enchantments into an embodiment of those inmost reproaches of conscience which we now go to the Lyceum to forget? It is all very well for Mr. Walkley to point out that Sir Henry Irving, Miss Ellen Terry and Miss Genevieve Ward would exactly suit the parts of Borkman, Ella and Gunhild in the new play; but what Sir Henry Irving wants to know is not whether he would suit the part, since he has good reason to consider himself actor enough to be able to suit many parts not worth his playing, but whether the part would suit him, which is quite another affair. That is the true centripetal force that keeps Ibsen off the stage.

Unfortunately, when we give up the Lyceum, we give up the only theatre of classic pretensions, officially recognized as such, in London. Mr. Oscar Barrett, when the details of his next pantomime are disposed of, might conceivably try one of the big spectacular Ibsen

plays at Drury Lane; but the experiment would be more of a new departure for him and for the theatre than for Sir Henry Irving and the Lyceum. Mr. Wyndham acts better than anybody else; he makes his company act better than any other company — so well that they occasionally act him off his own stage for months together; and he has not only the cleverness of the successful actor-manager, which is seldom more than the craft of an ordinary brain stimulated to the utmost by an overwhelming professional instinct, but the genuine ability of a good head, available for all purposes. But the pre-Ibsenite drama, played as he plays it, will last Mr. Wyndham's time; and the public mind still copes with the Ibsenite view of life too slowly and clumsily for the Criterion. The most humorous passages of Ibsen's work — three-fourths of "The Wild Duck," for instance — still seem to the public as puzzling, humiliating, and disconcerting as a joke always does to people who cannot see it. Comedy must be instantly and vividly intelligible or it is lost: it must therefore proceed on a thoroughly established intellectual understanding between the author and the audience — an understanding which does not yet exist between Ibsen and our playgoing public. But tragedy, like Handel's "darkness that might be felt," is none the worse theatrically for being intellectually obscure and oppressive. The pathos of Hedwig Ekdal's suicide or Little Eyolf's death is quite independent of any "explanation" of the play; but most of the fun of Hjalmar Ekdal, Gregers Werle, Relling, Molvik and Gina, to an audience still dominated by conventional ideals, must be as imperceptible, except when it hurts, as it is to Hjalmar himself. This puts the comedy houses out of the question, and leaves us with only Mr.

Alexander and Mr. Tree to look to. Both of them have been more enterprising than the public had any right to expect them to be. Mr. Tree actually produced "An Enemy of the People"; but I doubt if he has ever realized that his Stockman, though humorous and entertaining in its way, was, as a character creation, the polar opposite of Ibsen's Stockman. None the less, Mr. Tree's notion of feeding the popular drama with ideas, and gradually educating the public, by classical matinées, financed by the spoils of the popular plays in the evening bill, seems to have been the right one. Mr. Alexander's attempts to run "Guy Domville" and "The Divided Way" fairly proved that such plays should not be substituted for "The Prisoner of Zenda" and Shakespeare; for I submit that we do not want to suppress either Rose-Hope or Shakespeare, and that we can spare Sudermann, Ibsen, and Mr. Henry James from the footlights better than we could spare the entertainments which please everybody. But why not have both? If Mr. Alexander, instead of handing over "Magda" to fail in the evening bill at another theatre, had produced it and "Sodom's Ende" and so forth at a series of matinées of the "Saturday Pop" class, financing them from the exchequer of the kingdom of Ruritania, and aiming solely at the nourishment of the drama and the prevention of stagnation in public taste, he might have laid the foundations of a genuine classic theatre, in which the cultivated people who never dream of going to the theatre now would take their boxes and stalls by the season, and the hundred thousand people who go to the St. James's twice a year would be represented financially by four thousand going once a week.

At all events, the time for forlorn hopes has gone by. I observe by the publishers' columns that Mr.

Charles Charrington, the only stage-manager of genius the new movement has produced, and quite its farthest-seeing pioneer, has taken to literature. Miss Janet Achurch has relapsed into Shakespeare, and is going to play Cleopatra at the forthcoming Calvertian revival in Manchester, after which I invite her to look Ibsen in the face again if she can. Miss Robins is devoting the spoils of "Little Eyolf" to Echegaray's "Mariana," which must, for business reasons, be produced very soon. There are no signs of a fresh campaign on Miss Farr's part. The only other Ibsenite enthusiast is Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who is busy studying Emma Hamilton, the heroine of "the celestial bed," which will, I trust, figure duly in the forthcoming Nelson drama at the Avenue.

Altogether, the prospects of a speedy performance of "John Gabriel Borkman" are not too promising.

OLIVIA

Olivia: a play in four acts. By the late W. G. Wills. Founded on an episode in "The Vicar of Wakefield." Revival. Lyceum Theatre, 30 January, 1897.

THE world changes so rapidly nowadays that I hardly dare speak to my juniors of the things that won my affections when I was a sceptical, imperturbable, hard-headed young man of twenty-three or thereabouts. Now that I am an impressionable, excitable, sentimental — if I were a woman everybody would say hysterical — party on the wrong side of forty, I am conscious of being in danger of making my-

self ridiculous unless I confine my public expressions of enthusiasm to great works which are still before their time. That is why, when "Olivia" was revived at the Lyceum last Saturday, I blessed the modern custom of darkening the auditorium during the performance, since it enabled me to cry secretly. I wonder what our playgoing freshmen think of "Olivia." I do not, of course, mean what they think of its opening by the descent of two persons to the footlights to carry on an expository conversation beginning, "It is now twenty-five years since, &c.," nor the antediluvian asides of the "I do but dissemble" order in Thornhill's part, at which the gallery burst out laughing. These things are the mere fashions of the play, not the life of it. And it is concerning the life of it that I ask how the young people who see it to-day for the first time as I saw it nearly twenty years ago at the old Court Theatre feel about it.

I must reply that I have not the least idea. For what has this generation in common with me, or with "Olivia," or with Goldsmith? The first book I ever possessed was a Bible bound in black leather with gilt metal rims and a clasp, slightly larger than my sisters' Bibles because I was a boy, and was therefore fitted with a bigger Bible, precisely as I was fitted with bigger boots. In spite of the trouble taken to impress me with the duty of reading it (with the natural result of filling me with a conviction that such an occupation must be almost as disagreeable as going to church), I acquired a considerable familiarity with it, and indeed once read the Old Testament and the four Gospels straight through, from a vainglorious desire to do what nobody else had done. A sense of the sanctity of clergymen, and the holiness of Sunday, Easter and

Christmas — sanctity and holiness meaning to me a sort of reasonlessly inhibitory condition in which it was wrong to do what I liked and especially meritorious to make myself miserable — was imbibed by me, not from what is called a strict bringing-up (which, as may be guessed by my readers, I happily escaped), but straight from the social atmosphere. And as that atmosphere was much like the atmosphere of "Olivia," I breathe it as one to the manner born.

The question is, then, has that atmosphere changed so much that the play is only half comprehensible to the younger spectators? That there is a considerable change I cannot doubt; for I find that if I mention Adam and Eve, or Cain and Abel, to people of adequate modern equipment under thirty, they do not know what I am talking about. The Scriptural literary style which fascinated Wills as it fascinated Scott is to them quaint and artificial. Think of the difference between the present Bishop of London's History of the Popes and anything that the Vicar of Wakefield could have conceived or written! Think of the eldest daughters of our two-horse-carriage vicars going out, as female dons with Newnham degrees, to teach the granddaughters of ladies shamefacedly conscious of having been educated much as Mrs. Primrose was; and ponder well whether such domestic incidents can give any clue to poor Olivia going off by coach to be "companion" to "some old tabby" in Yorkshire, and — most monstrous of all — previously presenting her brothers with her Prayer-book and her "Pilgrim's Progress," and making them promise to pray for her every night at their mother's knee. Read "The Woman Who Did," bearing in mind its large circulation and the total failure of the attempt to work up the slight-

est public feeling against it; and then consider how obsolescent must be that part of the interest of "Olivia" which depends on her sense of a frightful gulf between her moral position as a legally married woman and that in which she feels herself when she is told that the legal part of the ceremony was not valid. Take, too, that old notion of the home as a sort of prison in which the parents kept their children locked up under their authority, and from which, therefore, a daughter who wished to marry without their leave had to escape through the window as from the Bastille! Must not this conception, which alone can give any reality to the elopement of Olivia, be very historical and abstract to the class of people to whom a leading London theatre might be expected to appeal? It is easy for me, taught my letters as I was by a governess who might have been Mrs. Primrose herself, to understand the Wakefield vicarage; but what I want to know is, can it carry any conviction to people who are a generation ahead of me in years, and a century in nursery civilization?

If I, drowning the Lyceum carpet with tears, may be taken as one extreme of the playgoing body, and a modern lady who, when I mentioned the play the other day, dismissed it with entire conviction as "beneath contempt," as the other, I am curious to see whether the majority of those between us are sufficiently near my end to produce a renewal of the old success. If not, the fault must lie with the rate of social progress; for "Olivia" is by a very great deal the best nineteenth-century play in the Lyceum repertory; and it has never been better acted. The Ellen Terry of 1897 is beyond all comparison a better Olivia than the Ellen Terry of 1885. The enchanting delicacy and charm with which she first stooped to folly at the old Court

Theatre was obscured at the Lyceum, partly, perhaps, by a certain wrathful energy of developed physical power, pride, strength and success in the actress, but certainly, as I shall presently show, by the Lyceum conditions. To-day the conditions are altered; the vanities have passed away with the water under the bridges; and the delicacy and charm have returned. We have the original Olivia again, in appearance not discoverably a week older, and much idealized and softened by the disuse of the mere brute force of tears and grief, which Miss Terry formerly employed so unscrupulously in the scene of the presents and of the elopement that she made the audience positively howl with anguish. She now plays these scenes with infinite mercy and art, the effect, though less hysterical, being deeper, whilst the balance of the second act is for the first time properly adjusted. The third act should be seen by all those who know Ellen Terry only by her efforts to extract a precarious sustenance for her reputation from Shakespeare: it will teach them what an artist we have thrown to our national theatrical Minotaur. When I think of the originality and modernity of the talent she revealed twenty years ago, and of its remorseless waste ever since in "supporting" an actor who prefers "The Iron Chest" to Ibsen, my regard for Sir Henry Irving cannot blind me to the fact that it would have been better for us twenty-five years ago to have tied him up in a sack with every existing copy of the works of Shakespeare, and dropped him into the crater of the nearest volcano. It really serves him right that his Vicar is far surpassed by Mr. Hermann Vezin's. I do not forget that there never was a more beautiful, a more dignified, a more polished, a more cultivated, a more perfectly mannered Vicar than Sir

Henry Irving's. He annihilated Thornhill, and scored off everybody else, by sheer force of behavior. When, on receiving that letter that looked like a notice of distraint for rent, he said, with memorable charm of diction, "The law never enters the poor man's house save as an oppressor," it was difficult to refrain from jumping on the stage and saying, "Heaven bless you, sir, why don't you go to London and start a proprietary chapel? You would be an enormous success there." There is nothing of this about the Vezin Vicar. To Farmer Flamborough he may be a fine gentleman; but to Thornhill he is a very simple one. To the innkeeper he is a prodigy of learning; but out in the world, looking for his daughter, his strength lies only in the pathos of his anxious perseverance. He scores off nobody except in his quaint theological disputation with the Presbyterian; but he makes Thornhill ashamed by not scoring off him. It is the appeal of his humanity and not the beauty of his style that carries him through; and his idolatry of his daughter is unselfish and fatherly, just as her affection for him is at last touched with a motherly instinct which his unworldly helplessness rouses in her. Handling the part skilfully and sincerely from this point of view, Mr. Hermann Vezin brings the play back to life on the boards where Sir Henry Irving, by making it the occasion of an exhibition of extraordinary refinement of execution and personality, very nearly killed it as a drama. In the third act, by appealing to our admiration and artistic appreciation instead of to our belief and human sympathy, Sir Henry Irving made Olivia an orphan. In the famous passage where the Vicar tries to reprove his daughter, and is choked by the surge of his affection for her, he reproved Olivia like a saint and then

embraced her like a lover. With Mr. Vezin the reproof is a pitiful stammering failure: its break-down is neither an "effect" nor a surprise: it is foreseen as inevitable from the first, and comes as Nature's ordained relief when the sympathy is strained to bursting point. Mr. Vezin's entry in this scene is very pathetic. His face is the face of a man who has been disappointed to the very heart every day for months; and his hungry look round, half longing, half anticipating another disappointment, gives just the right cue for his attitude towards Thornhill, to whom he says, "I forget you," not in conscious dignity and judgment, but as if he meant, "Have I, who forget *myself*, any heart to remember *you* whilst my daughter is missing?" When a good scene is taken in this way, the very accessories become eloquent, like the decent poverty of Mr. Vezin's brown overcoat. Sir Henry Irving, not satisfied to be so plain a person as the Vicar of Wakefield, gave us something much finer and more distinguished, the beauty of which had to stand as a substitute for the pathos of those parts of the play which it destroyed. Mr. Vezin takes his part for better for worse, and fits himself faithfully into it. The result can only be appreciated by those whose memory is good enough to compare the effect of the third act in 1885 and to-day. Also, to weigh Olivia with the Vicar right against Olivia with the Vicar wrong. I purposely force the comparison between the two treatments because it is a typical one. The history of the Lyceum, with its twenty years' steady cultivation of the actor as a personal force, and its utter neglect of the drama, is the history of the English stage during that period. Those twenty years have raised the social status of the theatrical profession, and culminated in the official recog-

nition of our chief actor as the peer of the President of the Royal Academy and the figureheads of the other arts. And now I, being a dramatist and not an actor, want to know when the drama is to have its turn. I do not suggest that G. B. S. should condescend to become K. C. B.; but I do confidently affirm that if the actors think they can do without the drama, they are most prodigiously mistaken. The huge relief with which I found myself turning from "Olivia" as an effective exhibition of the extraordinary accomplishments of Sir Henry Irving to "Olivia" as a naturally acted story has opened my eyes to the extent to which I have been sinking the true dramatic critic in the connoisseur in virtuosity, and forgetting what they were doing at the Lyceum in the contemplation of how they were doing it. Henceforth I shall harden my heart as Wagner hardened his heart against Italian singing, and hold diction, deportment, sentiment, personality and character as dust in the balance against the play and the credibility of its representation.

The rest of the company, not supporting, but supported *by* Mr. Vezin and Miss Terry — thereby reverting to the true artistic relation between the principal parts and the minor ones — appear to great advantage. Only, one misses Mr. Terriss as Thornhill, since Mr. Cooper cannot remake himself so completely as to give much point to Olivia's line, once so effective, "As you stand there flicking your boot, you look the very picture of vain indifference." Mr. Norman Forbes does not resume his old part of Moses, which is now played by Mr. Martin Harvey. Mr. Macklin as Burchell and Mr. Sam Johnson as Farmer Flamborough, Master Stewart Dawson and Miss Valli Valli as Dick and Bill, and Miss Julia Arthur as Sophia, all fall admirably

into their places. Miss Maud Milton is a notably good Mrs. Primrose: her share in the scene of the pistols, which attains a most moving effect, could not have been better. Miss Edith Craig makes a resplendent Bohemian Girl of the gipsy, the effect being very nearly operatic. Miss Craig may have studied her part from the life; but if so, I should be glad to know where, so that I may instantly ride off to have my fortune told by the original.

MR. WILSON BARRETT AS THE MESSIAH

The Daughters of Babylon: a play in four acts. By Wilson Barrett. Lyric Theatre, 6 February, 1897.

MR. WILSON BARRETT, responding to the editor of the "Academy," has just declared that his favorite books in 1896 were the Bible and Shakespeare. No less might have been expected from a manager who has combined piety with business so successfully as the author of "The Sign of the Cross." Isaiah has especially taken hold of his imagination. No doubt when he read, "Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough; and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter," he recognized in Isaiah the makings of a first-rate dramatic critic. But what touched him most was the familiar "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with

young." If Mr. Barrett had been a musician, like Handel, he would have wanted to set that text to music. Being an actor, he "saw himself in the part," and could not rest until he had gathered a lamb with his arm and carried it on to the stage in "The Daughters of Babylon." The imagined effect was not quite realized on the first night, partly, no doubt, because Mr. Edward Jones, the conductor of the band, omitted to accompany the entry with the obvious Handelian theme, and perhaps partly because the lamb proved unworthy of the confidence placed by Mr. Barrett in its good manners. But the strongest reason was that metaphor is not drama, nor *tableau vivant* acting. I hold Mr. Wilson Barrett in high esteem as a stage manager and actor; and I have no doubt that Mr. Wilson Barrett would allow that I am a fairly competent workman with my pen. But when he takes up the tools of my craft and tries his hand at dramatic literature, he produces exactly the same effect on me as I should produce on him if I were to try my hand at playing Othello. A man cannot be everything. To write in any style at all requires a good many years' practice: to write in the Scriptural style well enough to be able to incorporate actual passages from the Authorized Version of the Bible without producing the effect of patching a shabby pair of trousers with snippets of fifteenth-century Venetian brocade, requires not only literary skill of the most expert kind, but a special technical gift, such as Stevenson had, for imitating the turn of classical styles.

Mr. Wilson Barrett is here fairly entitled to interrupt me by saying, "Do not waste your time in telling me what I know already. I grant it all. But I have reverently submitted my qualifications to expert opin-

ion. Miss Marie Corelli, the most famous writer of the day, whose prodigious success has earned her the envious hate of the poor journeymen of literature to whom she will not even deign to send review copies of her books, tells me that I have 'the unpurchasable gift of genius'; that my language is 'choice and scholarly'; that I 'could win the laurels of the poet had I not opted for those of the dramatist'; that I have power and passion, orchidacity and flamboyancy; and that my 'Babylon' is better than 'The Sign of the Cross,' which was not only enormously successful, but was approved by the clerical profession, to whom Greek and Hebrew are as mother tongues. Who are you, pray, Mr. Saturday Reviewer, that I should set this mass of disinterested authority beneath your possibly envious disparagements?"

This is altogether unanswerable as far as the weight of authority is concerned. I confess that I am in an infinitesimal minority, and that my motives are by no means above suspicion. Therefore I must either hold my tongue or else rewrite the play to show how it ought to be done. Such a demonstration is beyond my means, unless a public subscription be raised to remunerate my toil; but I do not mind giving a sample or two. Suppose I were to tell Mr. Wilson Barrett that among the many judicial utterances in the Bible, by Solomon, Festus, Felix, Pilate, and others, I had found such a remark as "The evidence against thee is but slight," would he not burst out laughing at me for my ridiculous mixture of modern Old Bailey English with the obsolete fashion of using the second person singular? Yet he has used that very phrase in "The Daughters of Babylon." Pray observe that I should not at all object to the wording of the whole drama in

the most modern vernacular, even if it were carried to the extent of making the Babylonian idol seller talk like a coster. But modern vernacular seasoned with thees and thous and haths and whithers to make it sound peradventurously archaic is another matter. Let us have "There is not sufficient evidence against you," or else let us talk loftily of accusation and testimony, not of cases and evidence. Again, there is not, as far as I can remember, any account of an auction in the Bible; but if there were I should unhesitatingly reject it as apocryphal if one of the parties, instead of saying "Who is he that biddeth against me for this woman?" were to exclaim, "I demand to know the name of my opponent," which is Mr. Barrett's authorized version. If he had made Jediah say, "May I ask who the gentleman is?" that would have been perfectly allowable; but the phrase as it stands belongs neither to Christy's nor to the literary convention of the ideal Babylon: it is the ineptitude of an amateur. And would it not have been easier to write "The nether milestone is not so hard," than "The nether milestone is *tender in comparison*"? As to "We have wandered from the object of our visit, my lord," I really give it up in despair, and intemperately affirm that the man who, with a dozen tolerably congruous locutions ready to his hand, could select that absurdly incongruous one, does not know the Bible from "Bow Bells."

Miss Marie Corelli, who finds Mr. Barrett's phrases "choice and scholarly," gets over the difficulty of describing Ishtar in the blunt language of Scripture, by calling her, very choicely, "the Queen of the Half World of Babylon" — five words for one. Ishtar is very bitter throughout the play concerning the ferocity

of the Jewish law to women. Yet we find Lemuel, in the true spirit of a British tar, saying, "I will not harm thee, who art — whate'er thy sins — a Woman." I could not give a better example of the way in which the actor-dramatist will forget everything else, drama, common sense, and all, the moment an opening for some hackneyed stage effect, chivalrous pose, or sympathy-catching platitude occurs to him.

"The Daughters of Babylon," then, is not likely to please critics who can write; for nothing antagonizes a good workman so much as bad workmanship in his own craft. It will encounter also a prejudice against his exploitation of the conception of religious art held by the average English citizen. Against that prejudice, however, I am prepared to defend it warmly. I cannot for the life of me understand why Mr. Wilson Barrett should not do what Ary Scheffer and Müller, Sir Noel Paton and Mr. Goodall, Mr. Herbert Schmalz and the publishers of the Doré Bible, not to mention Miss Corelli herself, are doing, or have been doing, all through the century without protest. For my part, whilst, as a Superior Person, I reserve the right to look down on such conceptions of religion as Cæsar might have looked down at a toy soldier, yet the advance from the exploitation of illiterate and foolish melodramatic conventions in which nobody believes, to that of a sentiment which is a living contemporary reality, and which identifies the stage at last with popular artistic, literary and musical culture (such as it is), is to me more momentous than the production of "John Gabriel Borkman" at the Lyceum would be. Mr. Wilson Barrett has found that he can always bring down the house with a hymn: the first act of "The Daughters of Babylon," after driving the audience

nearly to melancholy madness by its dulness, is triumphantly saved in that way. Well, any one who takes a walk round London on Sunday evening will find, at innumerable street corners, little bands of thoroughly respectable citizens, with their wives and daughters, standing in a circle and singing hymns. It is not a fashionable thing to do — not even a conventional thing to do: they do it because they believe in it. And pray why is that part of their lives not to find expression in dramatic art as it finds expression, unchallenged, in all the other fine arts? Are we to drive Mr. Wilson Barrett back from his texts, his plagal cadences, and his stage pictures from the Illustrated Bible, to "Arrest that man: he is a murderer," or "Release that man: he is in-know-scent," or "Richard Dastardson: you shall rre-pent-er that-er b-er-low"? The pity is that Mr. Wilson Barrett does not go further and gratify his very evident desire to impersonate the Messiah without any sort of circumlocution or disguise. That we shall have Passion Plays in the London theatres as surely as we shall some day have "Parsifal" has for a long time past been as certain as any development under the sun can be; and the sooner the better. I have travelled all the way to Ober-Ammergau to see a Passion Play which was financed in the usual manner by a syndicate of Viennese Jews. Why should not the people who cannot go so far have a Passion Play performed for them in Shaftesbury Avenue? The fact that they want it is proved, I take it, by the success of "Barabbas." Depend on it, we shall see Mr. Wilson Barrett crucified yet; and the effect will be, not to debase religion, but to elevate the theatre, which has hitherto been allowed to ridicule religion but not to celebrate it, just as it has been

allowed to jest indecently with sex questions but not to treat them seriously.

As it is, "The Daughters of Babylon" suffers a good deal from our religious prudery. Mr. Wilson Barrett underplays his part to an extent quite unaccountable on the face of it, the fact being that he plays, not Lemuel, but the Messiah disguised as Lemuel, and therefore excludes all fear, passion and perplexity from his conception, retaining only moral indignation for strong effects, and falling back at other times on superhuman serenity, indulgence, pity and prophetic sadness. In short, he is playing a part which he did not venture to write; and the result is that the part he did write is sacrificed without any apparent compensation. It is dangerous for an actor to mean one part whilst playing another, unless the audience is thoroughly in the secret; and it is quite fatal for an author to mean one play and write another. There was no such want of directness in "The Sign of the Cross." In it the Christian scenes were as straightforward as the Roman ones; and Marcus Superbus was meant for Marcus Superbus and nobody else. In "The Daughters of Babylon" the Jewish scenes are symbolic; and though the Babylonian scenes are straightforward enough (and therefore much more effective), they are pervaded by the symbolic Lemuel, who lets them down dramatically every time he enters. With this doubleness of purpose at the heart of it, the play may succeed as a spectacle and a rite; but it will not succeed as a melodrama.

Like all plays under Mr. Barrett's management, "The Daughters of Babylon" is excellently produced. The scene painters are the heroes of the occasion. Mr. Telbin's grove standing among the cornfields on a

hilly plain, and Mr. Hann's view of Babylon by night, in the Doré style, are specially effective; and the tents of Israel on the hillside make a pretty bit of landscape in Mr. Ryan's "Judgment Seat by the City of Zoar," in which, however, the necessity for making the judgment seat "practicable" left it impossible for the artist to do quite as much as Mr. Telbin. The cast, consisting of thirty-three persons, all of them encouraged and worked up as if they were principals — a feature for which Mr. Wilson Barrett, as manager, can hardly have too much credit — must be content for the most part with a general compliment, the names being too many for mention. Mr. Franklin McLeay's Jediah bears traces of the epilepsy of Nero, an inevitable consequence of a whole year's run of convulsions; but he again makes his mark as an actor of exceptional interest and promise, who should be seen in a part sufficiently like himself to be played without the somewhat violent disguises he assumes at the Lyric. Mr. Ambrose Manning, as Alorus the Affable, has the only one of the long parts which is not occasionally tedious, a result largely due to his judgment in completely throwing over the stagey style which all the rest frankly adopt. Mr. Charles Hudson also contrives to emerge into some sort of particularity; but the other sixteen gentlemen defy distinction, except, perhaps, the fat Babylonian executioner, Mr. George Bernage, whose comfortable appearance is so little suited to his occupation as chief baker at the Nebuchadnezzaresque fiery furnace that his fearsomest utterances provoke roars of laughter. Miss Maud Jeffries appears to much advantage in rational dress in the Babylonian scenes. She makes Elna much more interesting than that whited wall the Christian Martyr in "The Sign of the Cross,"

and seems to have the American intelligence, character and humor, without the American lack of vitality. Indeed, her appearance in the first scene of the second act is the beginning of the play, as far as any dramatic thrill is concerned. Miss Lily Hanbury, specially engaged to be orchidaceous and flamboyant as the Improper Person of Babylon, and wholly guiltless of the least aptitude for the part, honestly gives as much physical energy to the delivery of the lines as she can, and is very like a pet lamb pretending to be a lioness. When Lemuel decided to let his sweetheart, himself, and all his faithful confederates be baked in the fiery furnace sooner than accept her proffered affection, the sympathy of the audience departed from him for ever. So did mine; but, all the same, I beg Miss Hanbury not to imagine, whatever the gallery may think, that she has learnt to act heavy parts merely because she has picked up the mere mechanics of ranting. And I implore her not to talk about "the lor of Babylon." The quarter-century during which Sir Henry Irving has been attacking his initial vowels with a more than German scrupulousness should surely by this time have made it possible for a leading actress to pronounce two consecutive vowels without putting an "r" between them.

The musical arrangements are so lavish as to include a performance of Max Bruch's "Kol Nidrei" (familiar as a violoncello piece) between the first and second acts, by a Dutch solo violinist of distinction, M. Henri Seiffert.

FOR ENGLAND, HOME, AND BEAUTY

Nelson's Enchantress: a new play in four acts, by Risden Home. Avenue Theatre, 11 February, 1897.

I AM beginning seriously to believe that Woman is going to regenerate the world after all. Here is a dramatist, the daughter of an admiral who was midshipman to Hardy, who was captain to Nelson, who committed adultery with Lady Hamilton, who was notoriously a polyandrist. And what is her verdict on Lady Hamilton? Simply that what the conventional male dramatist would call her "impurity" was an entirely respectable, lovable, natural feature of her character, inseparably bound up with the qualities which made her the favorite friend of England's favorite hero. There is no apology made for this view, no consciousness betrayed at any point that there is, or ever was, a general assumption that it is an improper view. There you have your Emma Hart, in the first act the mistress of Greville, in the second repudiated by Greville and promptly transferring her affection to his uncle, in the third married to the uncle and falling in love with another man (a married man), and in the fourth living with this man during his wife's lifetime, and parting from him at his death with all the honors of a wife. There is no more question raised as to the propriety of it all than as to Imogen's virtue in repulsing Iachimo. An American poetess, Mrs. Charlotte Stetson Perkins, has described, in biting little verses, how she met a Prejudice; reasoned with it, remonstrated with it, satirized it, ridiculed it, appealed to its

feelings, exhausted every argument and every blandishment on it without moving it an inch; and finally "just walked through it." A better practical instance of this could hardly be found than "Nelson's Enchantress." Ibsen argues with our prejudices — makes them, in fact, the subject of his plays. Result: we almost tear him to pieces, and shut our theatre doors as tight as we can against him. "Risden Home" walks through our prejudices straight on to the stage; and nobody dares even whisper that Emma is not an edifying example for the young girl of fifteen. Only, in the House of Commons a solitary Admiral wants the license of the theatre withdrawn for its presumption in touching on the morals of the quarter-deck. What does this simple salt suppose would have happened to the theatre if it had told the whole truth on the subject?

In order to realize what a terrible person the New Woman is, it is necessary to compare "Nelson's Enchantress" with that ruthlessly orthodox book, "The Heavenly Twins." It is true that Madame Sarah Grand, though a New Woman, will connive at no triflings with "purity" in its sense of monogamy. But mark the consequence. She will tolerate no Emma Harts; but she will tolerate no Nelsons either. She says, in effect, "Granted, gentlemen, that we are to come to you untouched and unspotted, to whom, pray, are we to bring our purity? To what the streets have left of *your* purity, perhaps? No, thank you: if we are to be certified pure, you shall be so certified too: wholesome husbands are as important to us as wholesome wives are to you." We all remember the frantic fury of the men, their savage denunciations of Madame Sarah Grand, and the instant and huge success of her

book. There was only one possible defence against it; and that was to boldly deny that there was anything unwholesome in the incontinences of men — nay, to appeal to the popular instinct in defence of the virility, the good-heartedness, and the lovable humanity of Tom Jones. Alas for male hypocrisy! No sooner has the expected popular response come than another New Woman promptly assumes that what is lovable in Tom Jones is lovable in Sophia Western also, and presents us with an ultra-sympathetic Enchantress heroine who is an arrant libertine. The dilemma is a pretty one. For my part, I am a man; and Madame Grand's solution fills me with dismay. What I should like, of course, would be the maintenance of two distinct classes of women, the one polyandrous and disreputable and the other monogamous and reputable. I could then have my fill of polygamy among the polyandrous ones with the certainty that I could hand them over to the police if they annoyed me after I had become tired of them, at which date I could marry one of the monogamous ones and live happily ever afterwards. But if a woman were to say such a thing as this about men I should be shocked; and of late years it has begun to dawn on me that perhaps when men say it (or worse still, act on it without confessing to it) women may be disgusted. Now it is a very serious thing for Man to be an object of disgust to Woman, on whom from his cradle to his grave he is as dependent as a child on its nurse. I would cheerfully accept the unpopularity of Guy Fawkes if the only alternative were to be generally suspected by women of nasty ideas about them: consequently I am forced to reconsider my position. If I must choose between accepting for myself the asceticism which I have hitherto light-

heartedly demanded from all respectable women, and extending my full respect and tolerance to women who live as freely as "Nelson's Enchantress," why then — but space presses, and this is not dramatic criticism. To business!

It is a pity that the Nelson of the play is a mere waxwork Nelson. The real man would have been an extraordinarily interesting hero. Nelson was no nice, cultured gentleman. He started sailoring, and living on a scorbutic diet of "salt horse" at twelve; was senior officer of an expedition and captain of a 44-gun ship when he was twenty-two; and was admiral in command of a fleet in one of the greatest naval engagements of modern times when he was forty. Could any character actor hit off the amphibiousness of such a person, and yet present to us also the inveterately theatrical hero who ordered his engagements like an actor-manager, made his signals to the whole British public, and wrote prayers for publication in the style of "The Sign of the Cross" instead of offering them up to the god of battles. With consummate professional skill founded on an apprenticeship that began in his childhood, having officers to match and hardy and able crews, and fighting against comparative amateurs at a time when the average French physique had been driven far below the average English one by the age of starvation that led to the burning of the châteaux and the Revolution, he solemnly devoted himself to destruction in every engagement as if he were leading a forlorn hope, and won not only on the odds, but on the boldest presumption on the odds. When he was victorious, he insisted on the fullest measure of glory, and would bear malice if the paltriest detail of his honors — the Mansion House dinner, for example —

were omitted. When he was beaten, which usually happened promptly enough when he made a shore attack, he denied it and raged like a schoolboy, vowing what he would do to his adversary the next time he caught him. He always played even his most heroic antagonists off the stage. At the battle of the Nile, Brueys, the French admiral, hopelessly outmanœuvred and outfought, refused to strike his colors and fought until the sea swallowed him and his defeat. Nothing could be more heroic. Nelson, on the other hand, was knocked silly, and remained more or less so for about three years, disobeying orders and luxuriating with Lady Hamilton, to the scandal of all Europe. And yet who in England even mentions the brave Brueys or that nasty knock on the head? As to Nelson's private conduct, he, sailor-like, married a widow on a foreign station; pensioned her off handsomely when she objected to his putting another woman in her place; and finally set up a *ménage à trois* with Sir William and Lady Hamilton, the two men being deeply attached to one another and to the lady, and the lady polyandrously attached to both of them. The only child of this "group marriage" was Nelson's, and not the lawful husband's. Pray what would you say, pious reader, if this were the story of the hero of an Ibsen play instead of the perfectly well known, and carefully never told, story of England's pet hero?

"Risden Home," I regret to say, does not rise to the occasion. Though she deals with Lady Hamilton like a New Woman, she deals with Nelson like a Married one, taking good care that he shall not set a bad example to husbands. She first gives us a momentary glimpse of Captain Horatio Nelson as an interesting and elegant young man, who could not possibly have ever suffered

from scurvy. She introduces him again as Admiral Nelson immediately after the battle of the Nile, with two eyes and an undamaged scalp. Lady Hamilton does not make a scene by crying "O my God!" and fainting on his breast. On the contrary, in a recklessly unhistorical conversation, they both confess their love and part for ever, to the entire satisfaction of the moral instincts of the British public. Everything having thus been done in proper form, Nelson is made Duke of Bronté for the Nile victory instead of for hanging Carracciolo; the remainder of Sir William Hamilton's lifetime is tactfully passed over; the existence of Lady Nelson and little Horatia is politely ignored; and Nelson is not reintroduced until his brief stay at Merton on the eve of Trafalgar. The fact that he has only just returned from spending two years very contentedly on board ship away from his Enchantress is not insisted on. He recites his Wilson-Barrettian prayer; parts from the heartbroken Emma; and is presently seen by her in a vision, dying in the cockpit of the "Victory," and — considerate to the last of the interests of morality in the theatre — discreetly omitting his recommendation of his illegitimate daughter to his country's care.

Need I add, as to Emma herself, that we are spared all evidence of the fact that Greville only allowed her £20 a year to dress on and pay her personal expenses; of her change from a sylph to a Fat Lady before the Nile episode; and the incorrigible cabotinage which inspired her first meeting with Nelson, her poses plastiques, and her habit, after Nelson's death, of going to concerts and fainting publicly whenever Braham was announced to sing "'T was in Trafalgar's Bay." In short, the Emma of the play is an altogether imaginary

person historically, but a real person humanly; whereas the Nelson, equally remote from history, is a pure heroic convention. It still remains true that the British public is incapable of admiring a real great man, and insists on having in his place the foolish image they suppose a great man to be.

Under such restrictions no author can be genuinely dramatic. "Risden Home" has had no chance except in the Greville episode of the first act; and this is of quite extraordinary merit as plays go nowadays. Greville is drawn as only a woman could draw him. Although the character sketches certainly lack the vividness, and the dialogue lacks the force and the independence of literary forms and conventions which a more practised hand could have given them, yet they are several knots ahead of average contemporary dramatic fiction. The literary power displayed is, after Mr. Wilson Barrett and Miss Corelli, positively classical; and the author has plenty of scenic instinct. We have probably not heard the last of "Risden Home."

Mrs. Patrick Campbell, in a wig so carefully modelled on that head of hair which is one of Miss Elizabeth Robins's most notable graces that for a moment I could hardly decide whether I was looking at Miss Robins made up like Mrs. Campbell or Mrs. Campbell made up like Miss Robins, is a charming Lady Hamilton. She even acts occasionally, and that by no means badly. In the first scene, her delivery of the long speech to Greville — an excellently written speech for stage use — is delivered as a schoolgirl repeats her catechism: its happy indifference of manner and glib utterance almost unhinged my reason. But in the scene of the breach with Greville she played excellently; and the rest of her part, though often underdone, was not

ill done — sometimes very much the reverse — and always gracefully and happily done. Mr. Forbes Robertson, as the waxwork Nelson, has no difficulty in producing the necessary effect, and giving it more interest than it has any right to expect. Mr. Nutcombe Gould plays Sir William Hamilton; Mr. Ben Greet, Romney; and Mr. Sydney Brough, Sir John Trevor. The mounting is all that can be desired, except that the studies in Romney's studio are absurdly made to resemble the well-known portraits of the real Lady Hamilton instead of Mrs. Campbell.

THE ECHEGARAY MATINÉES

Mariana. By José Echegaray. Translated by James Graham. Court Theatre, 22 February, 1897.

IT is now nearly two years since I pointed out, on the publication of Mr. James Graham's translations of Echegaray, that "Mariana" was pre-eminently a play for an actress-manageress to snap up. The only person who appreciated the opportunity in this country was Miss Elizabeth Robins. Mr. Daly, on the other side of the Atlantic, tried to secure the play for Miss Ada Rehan; but early as Mr. Daly gets up in the morning, Miss Robins gets up earlier: otherwise we might have had "Mariana," touched up in Mr. Daly's best Shakespearean style, at the Comedy last season instead of "Countess Gucki."

The weakness of "Mariana" lies in the unconvincing effect of the disclosure which brings about the catastrophe. When a circumstance that matters very little

to us is magnified for stage purposes into an affair of life and death, the resultant drama must needs be purely sensational: it cannot touch our consciences as they are touched by plays in which the motives are as real to us as the actions. If the atmosphere of "Mariana" were thoroughly conventional and old-fashioned, or if Mariana were presented at first as a fanatical idealist on the subject of "honor," like Ruy Gomez in "Hernani," or Don Pablo, we might feel with her that all was lost when she discovered in her chosen Daniel the son of the man with whom her mother had eloped, even though that circumstance does not involve the remotest consanguinity between them. But since she is introduced as the most wayward and wilful of modern women, moving in a by no means serious set, the fanatical action she takes is to a Londoner neither inevitable nor natural. For us there are only two objections to Daniel. The first — that it would be very embarrassing to meet his father — is trivial, and might be got over simply by refusing to meet him. The other — the repulsion created by the idea of Daniel's close relationship to the man she loathes — is credible and sufficient enough; but it is quite incompatible with the persistence of such an ardent affection for him that she can only fortify herself against his fascination by marrying a murderously jealous and straitlaced man for whom she does not care. In short, the discovery either produces a revulsion of feeling against Daniel or it does not. If it does, the monstrous step of marrying Pablo is unnecessary; if not, Mariana is hardly the woman to allow a convention to stand between her and her lover. At all events, it seems to me that the motive of the catastrophe, however plausible it may be in Spain, is forced and theatrical in London; that the

situation at the end of the third act is unconvincing; and that Englishwomen will never be able to look at Mariana and say, "But for the grace of God, there go I," as they do at Ibsen's plays. But with this reservation, the play is a masterly one. Not only have we in it an eminent degree of dramatic wit, imagination, sense of idiosyncrasy, and power over words (these qualifications are perhaps still expected from dramatists in Spain), but we have the drawing-room presented from the point of view of a man of the world in the largest sense. The average British play purveyor, who knows what a greengrocer is like, and knows what a stockbroker or editor is like, and can imagine what a duke is like, and cannot imagine what a Cabinet Minister is like; who has been once to the private view at the Academy in the year when his own portrait was exhibited there, and once to the Albert Hall to hear Albani in "Elijah," and once to the Opera to hear "Carmen," and has cultivated himself into a perfect museum of chatty ignorances of big subjects, is beside Echegaray what a beadle is beside an ambassador. Echegaray was a Cabinet Minister himself before the vicissitudes to which that position generally leads in Spain drove him, at forty-two, to turn his mind in exile to dramatic authorship. When you consider what a parochially insular person even Thackeray was, and how immeasurably most of our dramatists fall short of Thackeray in width of social horizon, you will be prepared for the effect of superiority Echegaray produces as a man who comprehends his world, and knows society not as any diner-out or Mayfair butler knows it, but as a capable statesman knows it.

The performance on Monday last began unhappily. In the first act everybody seemed afraid to do more

than hurry half-heartedly over an exposition which required ease, leisure, confidence, and brightness of comedy style to make it acceptable. In the preliminary conversation between Clara and Trinidad, Miss Sitgreaves and Miss Mary Keegan, though neither of them is a novice, were so ill at ease that we hardly dared look at them; and their relief when Mr. Hermann Vezin and Mr. Martin Harvey came to keep them in countenance was obvious and heartfelt. Yet, later on, Miss Sitgreaves, who is unmistakably a clever actress, made quite a hit; and Miss Keegan walked in beauty like the night with more than her customary aplomb. Even Miss Robins had to force her way in gray desperation through the first act until quite near the end, when Mr. Irving's fervor and a few lucky signs from the audience that the play was fastening upon them got the performance under way at last. Thereafter all went well. Miss Robins and Mr. Hermann Vezin carried the representation in the second act to a point at which even the picked part of the audience were reassured and satisfied, and the ordinary part became ruefully respectful, and perhaps even wondered whether it might not be the right thing, after all, to enjoy this sort of play more than looking at a tailor's advertisement making sentimental remarks to a milliner's advertisement in the middle of an upholsterer's and decorator's advertisement. However, much as I enjoyed Mr. Hermann Vezin's performance as Don Felipe, I must tell him in a friendly way that his style of acting will not do for the stage of to-day. He makes two cardinal mistakes. The first is that he accepts as the first condition of an impersonation that it should be credibly verisimilar. He is wrong: he should first make himself totally incredible and impossible, and

then, having fascinated the audience by an effect of singularity and monstrosity, heighten that effect by such appropriate proceedings as the part will lend itself to without absolute disaster. Second, he should remember that acting will no more go down without plenty of sentiment smeared all over it than a picture will without plenty of varnish. His matter-of-fact sensible ways in matter-of-fact sensible passages will not do: he should, either by thinking of his own greatness for half an hour in his dressing-room, or, if he has neither patience nor vanity enough for that, by a simple internal application of alcohol, work himself into a somnambulistic, hysterical, maudlin condition in which the most commonplace remark will seem fraught with emotions from the very ocean-bed of solemnity and pathos. That is the way to convince our Partridges that you are a real actor. However, it is an ill wind which blows nobody any good; and, as I happen to appreciate Mr. Vezin's rational style of acting, and to have a quite unspeakable contempt for the sleep-walking, drunken style, I hail Mr. Vezin's rare appearances with great enjoyment and relief. I wonder, by the way, why the possession of skill and good sense should be so fatal to an actor or actress as it is at present. Why do we never see Mr. Vezin or Mr. William Farren except when a revival of "The School for Scandal" or "Olivia" makes them absolutely indispensable? Why is it morally certain that if Mr. Hare had not gone into management, we should for years past have heard of him, without ever seeing him, as everybody's dearest friend, only so "dry," so "unlucky," so any-excuse-for-engaging-some-third-rate-nonentity-in-his-place, that he would be only a name to young playgoers? Why would Sir Henry Irving

and Mr. Wyndham vanish instantly from the stage if they did not hold their places by the strong hand as managers? I said I wondered at these things; but that was only a manner of speaking, for I think I know the reasons well enough. They will be found in my autobiography, which will be published fifty years after my death.

Well, as I have intimated, Mr. Vezin was an excellent Felipe, and in fact secured the success of the play by his support to Mariana in the critical second act. But Miss Robins would, I think, have succeeded at this point triumphantly, support or no support; for the scene is not only a most penetrating one, but it demands exactly those qualities in which her strength lies, notably an intensity in sympathizing with herself which reminds one of "David Copperfield." The parallel will bear pursuing by those who are interested in arriving at a clear estimate of Miss Robins's peculiar assortment of efficiencies and deficiencies — an assortment commoner off the stage than on it. For instance, she fails as Mariana just where Dickens would have failed if he had attempted to draw such a character: that is, in conveying the least impression of her impulsive rapture of love for Daniel. Almost any woman on the stage, from the most naïve little animal in our musical farces up to the heartwise Miss Ellen Terry, could have played better to Daniel than Miss Robins did. Her love scenes have some scanty flashes of mischievous humor in them, of vanity, of curiosity of a vivisectionist kind — in short, of the egotistical, cruel side of the romantic instinct; but of its altruistic, affectionate side they have not a ray or beam. Only once did a genuine sympathetic impulse show itself; and that was not to Daniel, but to the foster-father, Felipe.

Yet Miss Robins played the lover very industriously. She rose, and turned away, and changed chairs, and was troubled and tranquil, grave and gay, by turns, and gave flowers from her bosom, all most painstakingly. Being unable to put her heart into the work and let it direct her eyes, she laid muscular hold of the eyes at first hand and worked them from the outside for all they were worth. But she only drew blood once; and that was when she looked at Daniel and said something to the effect that "Nobody can look so ridiculous as a lover." There was no mistake about the sincerity of that, or of the instant response from the audience, which had contemplated Miss Robins's elaborately acted and scrupulously gentlemanlike gallantries with oppressed and doubting hearts.

I must say I cannot bring myself to declare this a shortcoming on Miss Robins's part, especially since her success as the sympathetic Asta Allmers proves that it cannot have been the affection that eluded her, but only the romance. Among the Russian peasantry young people when they fall romantically in love are put under restraint and treated medically as lunatics. In this country they are privileged as inspired persons, like ordinary lunatics in ignorant communities; and if they are crossed, they may (and often do) commit murder and suicide with the deepest public sympathy. In "John Gabriel Borkman" (a performance of which is promised by Miss Robins immediately after Easter) a lady, Mrs. Wilton, elopes with a young man. Being a woman of some experience, thoroughly alive to the possibility that she will get tired of the young man, or the young man of her, not to mention the certainty of their boring one another if they are left alone together too much with no resource but lovemaking, she

takes the precaution of bringing another woman along with her. This incident has provoked a poignant squeal of indignation from the English Press. Much as we journalists are now afraid of Ibsen after the way in which we burnt our fingers in our first handling of him, we could not stand Mrs. Wilton's forethought. It was declared on all hands an unaccountable, hideous, and gratuitously nasty blemish on a work to which, otherwise, we dared not be uncomplimentary. But please observe that if Ibsen had represented Mrs. Wilton as finding a love letter addressed by Borkman Junior to Frida Foldal, and as having thereupon murdered them both and then slain herself in despair on their corpses, everybody would have agreed that a lady could do no less, and that Ibsen had shown the instinct of a true tragic poet in inventing the incident. In this very play of Echegaray's, a man who has already murdered one wife out of jealousy shoots Mariana before the eyes of the audience on the same provocation, as a preliminary to killing her lover in a duel. This atrocious scoundrel is regarded as showing a high sense of honor, although if, like the heroes of some of our divorce cases, he had merely threatened to kill his wife's pet dog out of jealousy of her attachment to it, public sympathy would have abandoned him at once. Under such circumstances, and with the newspapers containing at least three romantic murders a fortnight as symptoms of the insane condition of the public mind in sex matters, I hail the evidences of the Russian view in Miss Robins with relief and respect; and I sincerely hope that on this point she will not try to adapt her acting to the drama, but will insist on the drama being adapted to her acting.

This does not alter the fact that until we have a

Mariana who can convince us that she is as great a fool about Daniel as Daniel is about her, we shall not have the Mariana of Echegaray. And when we get the right Mariana in that respect, she will probably fall short of Miss Robins in that side of the part which is motived by Mariana's intense revulsion from the brutality, selfishness and madness which underlie the romantic side of life as exemplified by her mother's elopement with Alvarado. Here Miss Robins carries all before her; and if only her part as the modern woman cured of romance, and fully alive to the fact that the romantic view of her sex is the whole secret of its degradation, were not manacled to another part — that of the passionately romantic old-fashioned woman — her triumph in it would be complete. As it is, the performance must needs produce an effect of inequality; and those who, not being trained critical analysts, cannot discover the clue to its variations, must be a good deal puzzled by the artificiality of Miss Robins's treatment of the love theme, which repeatedly mars the effect of her genuine power over the apparently more difficult theme of the lesson she has learnt from Alvarado, and of her impulse to place herself under the grim discipline of Pablo. The main fault really lies, as I have shown, with the dramatist, who has planned his play on the romantic lines of Schiller and Victor Hugo, and filled it in with a good deal of modern realist matter.

Mr. H. B. Irving, as Daniel, is untroubled by Russian scruples, and raves his way through the transports of the Spanish lover in a style which will not bear criticism, but nevertheless disarms it, partly by its courage and thoroughness, partly because it is the only possible style for him at the present stage of his trying but not

unpromising development as an actor. Mr. Welch's Castulo is a masterpiece of manner and make-up. Mr. O'Neill is not quite fitted as Pablo: he looks more likely to get shot by Miss Robins than to shoot her. Mr. Martin Harvey, Mr. George Bancroft, and Miss Mabel Hackney take care of the minor parts. As matters of detail I may suggest that the first act might have been improved by a little more ingenuity of management, and by a slight effort on the part of the company to conceal their hurry to get through it. Also that Mr. Irving will certainly be cut off with a shilling if his father ever hears him speak of "the Marianer of my dreams," and that Miss Robins's diction, once very pleasant, and distinguished by a certain charming New England freshness, is getting stained and pinched with the tricks of genteel Bayswater cockneydom — a thing not to be suffered without vehement protest.

GALLERY ROWDYISM

The Mac Haggis: a farce in three acts, by Jerome K. Jerome and Eden Philpotts. Globe Theatre, 25 February, 1897.

"THE MAC HAGGIS," at the Globe Theatre, is a wild tale of a prim young London gentleman who suddenly succeeds to the chieftainship of a Highland clan — such a clan as Mr. Jerome K. Jerome might have conceived in a nightmare after reading "Rob Roy." It is an intentionally and impenitently outrageous play: in fact its main assumptions are almost as nonsensical as those of an average

serious drama; but its absurdity is kept within the limits of human endurance by the Jeromian shrewdness and humanity of its small change. Nevertheless it is not good enough for Mr. Weedon Grossmith, being only the latest of a long string of farces written for him on the assumption that he is a funny man and nothing more. The truth is that he is the only first-rate comedian under fifty on the London stage. Later on he may find a worthy rival in Mr. Welch; but at present his superiority in comedy is incontestable. In this Mac Haggis business, silly as much of it is, there is not a touch of caricature or a taint of clowning. Take for example the farcical duel with Black Hamish in the last act, which might have been designed as a bit of business for a circus clown. Mr. Grossmith lifts it to the comedy plane by acting that fight as if he were on Bosworth Field. His gleam of self-satisfaction when he actually succeeds in hitting his adversary's shield a very respectable thwack, and the blight that withers up that perky little smile as the terrible Hamish comes on undaunted, are finer strokes of comedy than our other comedians can get into the most delicate passages of parts written by Jones and Pinero. He never caricatures, never grimaces, never holds on to a laugh like a provincial tenor holding on to his high B flat, never comes out of his part for an instant, never relaxes the most anxious seriousness about the affairs of the character he is impersonating, never laughs at himself or with the audience, and is, in consequence, more continuously and keenly amusing in farce than any other actor I ever saw except Jefferson. The very naturalness of his work leads the public into taking its finest qualities as a matter of course; so that whilst the most inane posing exhibitions by our tailor-made leading

men are gravely discussed as brilliant conceptions and masterly feats of execution, Mr. Grossmith's creations, exemplifying all the artistic qualities which others lack, pass as nothing more than the facetiousnesses of a popular entertainer.

" The Mac Haggis " is happily cast and well played all round, Miss Laura Johnson giving an appalling intensity to the restless audacities of Eweretta. Miss Johnson will probably be able to do justice to a moderately quiet part when she is eighty-five or thereabouts: at present she seems to have every qualification of a modern actress except civilization. This was the secret of her success as Wallaroo in " The Duchess of Coolgardie." In all her parts she " goes Fantee " more or less.

Although there were no dissentients to the applause at the end of " The Mac Haggis," the authors did not appear to make the customary acknowledgments. For some time past the gods have been making themselves a more and more insufferable nuisance. The worry of attending first nights has been mercilessly intensified by the horrible noises they offer to their idols as British cheers. I do not object to a cheer that has the unmistakable depth and solidity of tone that come only from a genuine ebullition of enthusiasm; but this underbred, heartless, incontinent, wide-mouthed, slack-fibred, brainless bawling is wearisome and disgusting beyond endurance. Naturally it provokes furious opposition; and of late an attempt has been made to countermine the people who bawl indiscriminately at everything and everybody by forming an opposition which resolutely boos at everybody and everything. This of course only makes two uproars, each stimulating the other to redoubled obstreperousness, where

formerly there was but one. Both the managers and the authors have been forced at last to take action in the matter. Mr. Henry Arthur Jones left the gods at the Garrick to howl vainly for the author for twenty-five minutes after the fall of the curtain; and Mr. Jerome K. Jerome has followed his example both at the Prince of Wales and Globe Theatres. The managers held back until the first-nighters, getting bolder in their misconduct, began to interrupt the actors just as political speakers are interrupted at stormy election meetings. Then they called in the police.

Thereupon much soreness of feeling broke out. The first-nighters, quite unconscious that their silliness and rowdiness had long ago revolted the most indulgent of their friends, and still believing themselves to be a popular institution instead of an exasperating public nuisance, were deeply hurt at the unkindness of the managers, the injustice of the police (who are apt to propitiate public order with vicarious sacrifices on such occasions), and the attack on their privilege of clamor. Finally an understanding was arrived at. The right of the gallery to hiss and hoot and bawl to its heart's content was fully admitted as a principle of the British Constitution, the least infringement of which would be equivalent to the tearing up of Magna Charta; but it was agreed that the right should not be exercised until the fall of the curtain.

The result of this was of course that the gallery now began to hoot as an affirmation of its right to hoot, without reference to the merits of the performance. The gentlemen who had formerly lain in wait for such lines as "Let me tell you that you are acting detestably," or "Would that the end were come!" to disconcert the speaker with a sarcastic "Hear, hear!" felt

that since they had exchanged this amusement for leave to hiss as much as they liked at the end of the play, the permission must not lie unused. "The Daughters of Babylon" was the first great occasion on which the treaty came into operation; and the gallery seized the opportunity to outdo its own folly. In the first act every popular favorite in the cast was greeted by an outburst of old forced, artificial, unmanly, undignified, base-toned, meaningless howling which degrades the gallery to the level of a menagerie. At the end the hooting — the constitutional hooting — began; and immediately a trial of endurance set in between the hooters and those who wished to give Mr. Wilson Barrett an ovation. After a prolonged and dismal riot, Mr. Barrett turned the laugh against the hooters, shouted them down with half a dozen stentorian words, and finally got the audience out of the house. At "Nelson's Enchantress" the same medley of applause and hooting arose; and Mr. Forbes Robertson, not caring, doubtless, to ask "Risden Home" to make her first appearance by exposing herself to a half silly, half blackguardly mob demonstration, made her acknowledgments for her. But the moment he said — what else could he say? — that he would convey her the favorable reception of her piece, the hooters felt that their constitutional rights would be ignored unless Mr. Robertson conveyed the hoots as well as the plaudits. He very pointedly declined to do anything of the kind, and rebuked the constitutional party, which retired abashed but grumbling.

These little scenes before the curtain are so obviously mischievous and disgraceful, that the malcontents and the constitutionalists are now reinforced by a section of demonstrators whose object it is to put a stop

to the speech-making, author-calling system altogether. It will be remembered that on the first night of "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" Mr. Hare was about to respond to the demands for a speech. Just as he opened his mouth to begin somebody called out "No speech." Mr. Hare, with great presence of mind, immediately bowed and withdrew. Nobody has since been so successful in helping a manager out of a senseless ceremony; but the objection on principle to speech-making still struggles for expression in the tumult.

Here, then, we have so many elements of disorder that it is necessary to give the situation some serious consideration. Let us see, to begin with, whether the alleged constitutional right to hoot and hiss can be defended. I suppose it will not be denied that it is on the face of it so offensive and unmannerly a thing for one man to hiss and hoot at another that such conduct must stand condemned unless it can be justified as a criminal sentence is justified. I know that there are gallery-goers who contend that if the people who like the play applaud it, the people who dislike it should in justice show, by expressing their dissatisfaction, that the approval is not unanimous. They might as well contend that if a gentleman who admires a lady tells her that she has pretty hands, any bystander who does not admire her should immediately in justice tell her that she has a red nose, or that because foolish admirers of actresses throw bouquets to them, those who think the compliment undeserved should throw bad eggs and dead cats. No: hooting must stand or fall by its pretension to be a salutary and necessary department of lynch law. Now in punishing criminals we treat them with atrocious cruelty — so much so that a good deal of crime goes unpunished at present because hu-

mane people will not call in the police or prosecute except in extreme cases. But cruel as our punishments are, we do not now make a sport of them as our forefathers did. Though we deal out sentences of hard labor and of penal servitude which some of the victims would willingly exchange, if they could, for the stocks, the pillory, or a reasonable degree of branding, flogging, or ear-clipping, it cannot be said of our methods that they are hypocritical devices for gratifying our own vilest lusts under the cloak of justice. We did not stop flogging women at the cart's tail through the streets because the women disliked it — we condemn women to much more dreadful penalties at every sessions — but because the public liked it. Solitary confinement is a diabolical punishment; but at least nobody gets any gratification out of it; and the fun of seeing a black flag go up on a prison flagstaff must be very poor compared to the bygone Tyburnian joys of seeing the culprit hanged. Hence I submit that if an author or actor is to be punished for bad play or a bad performance, his punishment should not be made a popular sport. The punishment of setting him before the curtain to be hooted at is nothing but a survival of the pillory. Why should the theatre lag behind the police court in this respect? Why is the lust of the rabble to mock, jeer, insult, deride, and yell bestially at their unfortunate fellow-creatures recognized as sacred in the gallery when it is suppressed by the police everywhere else? I use the word rabble because it was invented to describe a crowd which has thrown away all decency of behavior and is conducting itself just as savagely and uproariously as it dares. The people in the stalls and balcony and amphitheatre are superior to the rabble, not because they pay more

for admission, but because they do not yell, are content with clapping when they are pleased, and go home quietly when they are disappointed. The people in the pit and gallery who do yell, either approvingly or maliciously, and who remain making a disturbance until somebody comes out to confront them, are a rabble and nothing else. What right have they to behave in such a way? They don't do it at concerts; they don't do it in church; even in International Socialist Congresses and in the House of Commons, both notoriously disorderly places, such scenes are the exception and not the rule. As to the notion that such disorder has any beneficial effect as an informal censorship of the drama, I really cannot condescend to discuss so grotesque a pretension. If there is a case in which lynch law might be supposed to have some use in the theatre, it is that of the low comedian who deliberately interpolates obscene gags into musical farces, and implicates in them the performer to whom he is speaking. A single vigorous hiss from the gallery would cure any actor for ever of such blackguardism. When has that hiss ever been forthcoming? On the other hand, the gallery will trample furiously on delicate work like Mr. Henry James's, and keep refined and sensitive artists who attempt original and thoughtful work in dread all through the first night lest some untheatrical line should provoke a jeer or some stroke of genuine pathos a coarse laugh. There would be nothing to fear if playgoers were not demoralized by the low standard of manners and conduct prevailing in the gallery. What possibility is there of fine art flourishing where full license to yell — the license of the cockpit and prize-ring — is insisted on by men who never dream of misbehaving themselves elsewhere?

If I were starting in theatrical management to-morrow, I should probably abolish the shilling gallery on first nights, and make the lowest price of admission either half a crown or threepence, according to the district. A threepenny gallery is humble and decent, a half-crown one snobbish and continent. A shilling gallery has the vices of both and the virtues of neither. But if the shilling gallery is to continue, let it behave as the stalls behave: that is, applaud, when it wants to applaud, with its hands and not with its voice, and go home promptly and quietly when it does not want to applaud. If there is anything wrong with the performance, the management and the author will expiate it quite severely enough by heavy loss and disappointment. I may add that clapping as a method of applause has the great advantage of being more expensive than shouting. The compass of vigor and speed of repercussion through which it varies is so great that its *nuances* are practically infinite: you can tell, if your ear is worth anything, whether it means a perfunctory "Thanks awf'ly," or a cool "Good evening: sorry I shan't be able to come again," or an eager "Thank you *ever* so much: it was splendid," or any gradation between. Shouting can convey nothing but "Booh!" or "Hooray!" except, as I have said, in moments of real enthusiasm, quite foreign to the demonstrativeness of our theatre fanciers and greenroom gossip swallowers. Best of all would be no applause; but that will come later on. For the present, since we cannot contain ourselves wholly, let us at least express ourselves humanly and sensibly.

MADOX BROWN, WATTS, AND IBSEN

13 March, 1897.

IT has not yet been noticed, I think, that the picture galleries in London are more than usually interesting just now to those lovers of the theatre who fully understand the saying "There is only one art." At the Grafton Gallery we have the life-work of the most dramatic of all painters, Ford Madox Brown, who was a realist; at the New Gallery that of Mr. G. F. Watts, who is an idealist; and at the Academy that of Leighton, who was a mere gentleman draughtsman.

I call Madox Brown a Realist because he had vitality enough to find intense enjoyment and inexhaustible interest in the world as it really is, unbeautified, unidealized, untitivated in any way for the artistic consumption. This love of life and knowledge of its worth is a rare thing — whole Alps and Andes above the common market demand for prettiness, fashionableness, refinement, elegance of style, delicacy of sentiment, charm of character, sympathetic philosophy (the philosophy of the happy ending), decorative moral systems contrasting roseate and rapturous vice with lilied and languorous virtue, and making "Love" face both ways as the universal softener and redeemer, the whole being worshipped as beauty or virtue, and set in the place of life to narrow and condition it instead of enlarging and fulfilling it. To such self-indulgence most artists are mere pandars; for the sense of beauty needed to make a man an artist is so strong that the sense of life in him must needs be quite prodigious to over-

power it. It must always be a mystery to the ordinary beauty-fancying, life-shirking amateur how the realist in art can bring his unbeautified, remorseless celebrations of common life in among so many pretty, pleasant, sweet, noble, touching fictions, and yet take his place there among the highest, although the railing, the derision, the protest, the positive disgust, are almost universal at first. Among painters the examples most familiar to us are Madox Brown and Rembrandt. But Madox Brown is more of a realist than Rembrandt; for Rembrandt idealized his color: he would draw life with perfect integrity, but would paint it always in a golden glow — as if he cared less for the direct light of the sun than for its reflection in a pot of treacle — and would sacrifice real color to that stage glow without remorse. Not so Madox Brown. You can all breathe his open air, warm yourself in his sun, and smell "the green mantle of the standing pool" in his Dalton picture. Again, Rembrandt would have died rather than paint a cabbage unconditionally green, or meddle with those piercing aniline discords of color which modern ingenuity has extracted from soot and other unpromising materials. Madox Brown took to Paisley shawls and magenta ribbons and genuine greengrocer's cabbages as kindly as Wagner took to "false relations" in harmony. But turn over a collection of Rembrandt's etchings, especially those innumerable little studies which are free from the hobby of the chiaroscurist; and at once you see the uncompromising realist. Examine him at the most vulnerable point of the ordinary male painter — his studies of women. Women begin to be socially tolerable at thirty, and improve until the deepening of their consciousness is checked by the decay of their faculties. But they begin to be

pretty much earlier than thirty, and are indeed sometimes at their best in that respect long before their chattering is, apart from the illusions of sex, to be preferred in serious moments to the silent sympathy of an intelligent pet animal. Take the young lady painted by Ingres as "La Source," for example. Imagine having to make conversation for her for a couple of hours. Ingres is not merely indifferent to this: he is determined to make you understand that he values her solely for her grace of form, and is too much the classic to be affected by any more cordial consideration. Among Rembrandt's etchings, on the other hand, you will find plenty of women of all sorts; and you will be astonished and even scandalized at the catholicity of his interest and tolerance. He makes no conditions, classical or moral, with his heroines: Venus may be seventy, and Chloe in her least presentable predicament: no matter: he draws her for her own sake with enormous interest; neither as a joke, nor a moral lesson, nor a model of grace, but simply because he thinks her worth drawing as she is. You find the same thing in Madox Brown. Nature itself is not more unbiassed as between a pretty woman and a plain one, a young woman and an old one, than he. Compare the comely wife of John of Gaunt in the Wycliffe picture with the wife of Foscari, who has no shop-window good looks to give an agreeable turn to the pitifulness of her action as she lifts the elbow of the broken wretch whose maimed hands cannot embrace her without help. A *bonne bouche* of prettiness here would be an insult to our humanity; but in the case of Mrs. John of Gaunt, the good looks of the wife as she leans over and grabs at the mantle of John, who, in the capacity of the politically excited Englishman, is duly making a fool

of himself in public, give the final touch to the humor and reality of the situation. Nowhere do you catch the mature Madox Brown at false pathos or picturesque attitudinizing. Think of all the attitudes in which we have seen Francesca di Rimini and her lover; and then look at the Grafton Gallery picture of that deplorable, ridiculous pair, sprawling in a death agony of piteous surprise and discomfiture where the brutish husband has just struck them down with his uncouthly murderous weapon. You ask disgustedly where is the noble lover, the beautiful woman, the Cain-like avenger? You exclaim at the ineptitude of the man who could omit all this, and simply make you feel as if the incident had really happened and you had seen it — giving you, not your notion of the beauty and poetry of it, but the life and death of it. I remember once, when I was an "art critic," and when Madox Brown's work was only known to me by a few drawings, treating Mr. Frederick Shields to a critical demonstration of Madox Brown's deficiencies, pointing out in one of the drawings the lack of "beauty" in some pair of elbows that had more of the wash tub than of "The Toilet of Venus" about them. Mr. Shields contrived without any breach of good manners to make it quite clear to me that he considered Madox Brown a great painter and me a fool. I respected both convictions at the time; and now I share them. Only, I plead in extenuation of my folly that I had become so accustomed to take it for granted that what every English painter was driving at was the sexual beautification and moral idealization of life into something as unlike itself as possible, that it did not at first occur to me that a painter could draw a plain woman for any other reason than that he could not draw a pretty one.

Now turn to Mr. Watts, and you are instantly in a visionary world, in which life fades into mist, and the imaginings of nobility and beauty with which we invest life become embodied and visible. The gallery is one great transfiguration: life, death, love and mankind are no longer themselves: they are glorified, sublimified, lovelified: the very draperies are either rippling lakes of color harmony, or splendid banners like the flying cloak of Titian's Bacchus in the National Gallery. To pretend that the world is like this is to live the heavenly life. It is to lose the whole world and gain one's own soul. Until you have reached the point of realizing what an astonishingly bad bargain that is you cannot doubt the sufficiency of Mr. Watts's art, provided only your eyes are fine enough to understand its language of line and color.

Now if you want to emulate my asinine achievements as a critic on the occasion mentioned above in connection with Mr. Shields, you cannot do better than criticize either painter on the assumption that the other's art is the right art. This will lead you by the shortest cut to the conclusion either that Mr. Watts's big picture of the drayman and his horses is the only great work he ever achieved, or that there is nothing endurable in Madox Brown's work except the embroidery and furniture, a few passages of open-air painting, and such technical *tours de force* as his combination of the virtuosities of the portrait styles of Holbein, Antonio Moro, and Rembrandt in the imaginary portrait of Shakespeare. In which event I can only wish you sense enough to see that your conclusion is not a proof of the futility of Watts or Madox Brown, but a *reductio ad absurdum* of your own critical method.

And now, what has all this to do with the drama?

Even if it had nothing to do with it, reader, the question would be but a poor return for the pains I am taking to improve your mind; but let that pass. Have you never been struck with the similarity between the familiar paroxysms of Anti-Ibsenism and the abuse, the derision, the angry distaste, the invincible misunderstanding provoked by Madox Brown? Does it not occur to you that the same effect has been produced by the same cause — that what Ibsen has done is to take for this theme, not youth, beauty, morality, gentility, and propriety as conceived by Mr. Smith of Brixton and Bayswater, but real life taken as it is, with no more regard for poor Smith's dreams and hypocrisies than the weather has for his shiny silk hat when he forgets his umbrella? Have you forgotten that Ibsen was once an idealist like Mr. Watts, and that you can read "The Vikings," or "The Pretenders," or "Brand," or "Emperor or Galilean" in the New Gallery as suitably as you can hang Madox Brown's "Parisina" or "Death of Harold" in the Diploma Gallery at the Royal Academy? Or have you not noticed how the idealists who are full of loathing for Ibsen's realistic plays will declare that these idealistic ones are beautiful, and that the man who drew Solveig the Sweet could never have descended to Hedda Gabler unless his mind had given way.

I had intended to pursue this matter much further; but I am checked, partly by want of space, partly because I simply dare not go on to Leighton, and make the application of his case to the theatre. Madox Brown was a man; Watts is at least an artist and poet; Leighton was only a gentleman. I doubt if it was ever worth while being a gentleman, even before the thing had become the pet fashion of the lower-

middle class; but to-day, happily, it is no longer tolerated among capable people, except from a few old Palmerstonians who do not take it too seriously. And yet you cannot cure the younger actor-managers of it. Sir Henry Irving stands on the Watts plane as an artist and idealist, cut off from Ibsen and reality by the deplorable limitations of that state, but at least not a snob, and only a knight on public grounds and by his own peremptory demand, which no mere gentleman would have dared to make lest he should have offended the court and made himself ridiculous. But the others! — the knights expectant. Well, let me not be too high-minded at their expense. If they are Leightonian, they might easily be worse. There are less handsome things in the world than that collection of pictures at the Academy, with its leading men who are all gentlemen, its extra ladies whose Liberty silk robes follow in their flow the Callipygean curves beneath without a suggestion of coarseness, its refined resolution to take the smooth without the rough, Mayfair without Hoxton, Melbury Road without Saffron Hill. All very nice, gentlemen and ladies; but much too negative for a principle of dramatic art. To suppress instead of to express, to avoid instead of to conquer, to ignore instead of to heal: all this, on the stage, ends in turning a man into a stick for fear of creasing his tailor's handiwork, and a woman into a hairdresser's window image lest she should be too actressy to be invited to a fashionable garden-party.

SHAKESPEARE IN MANCHESTER

20 March, 1897.

Antony and Cleopatra. Shakespearean revival by Mr. Louis Calvert at the Queen's Theatre, Manchester.

SHAKESPEARE is so much the word-musician that mere practical intelligence, no matter how well prompted by dramatic instinct, cannot enable anybody to understand his works or arrive at a right execution of them without the guidance of a fine ear. At the emotional climaxes in his works we find passages which are Rossinian in their reliance on symmetry of melody and impressiveness of march to redeem poverty of meaning. In fact, we have got so far beyond Shakespeare as a man of ideas that there is by this time hardly a famous passage in his works that is considered fine on any other ground than that it sounds beautifully, and awakens in us the emotion that originally expressed itself by its beauty. Strip it of that beauty of sound by prosaic paraphrase, and you have nothing left but a platitude that even an American professor of ethics would blush to offer to his disciples. Wreck that beauty by a harsh, jarring utterance, and you will make your audience wince as if you were singing Mozart out of tune. Ignore it by "avoiding singsong" — that is, ingeniously breaking the verse up so as to make it sound like prose, as the professional elocutionist prides himself on doing — and you are landed in a stilted, monstrous jargon that has not even the prosaic merit of being intelligible. Let me give one example: Cleopatra's outburst at the death of Antony: —

"O withered is the garland of the war,
The soldier's pole is fallen: young boys and girls
Are level now with men: the odds is gone,
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon."

This is not good sense — not even good grammar. If you ask what does it all mean, the reply must be that it means just what its utterer feels. The chaos of its thought is a reflection of her mind, in which one can vaguely discern a wild illusion that all human distinction perishes with the gigantic distinction between Antony and the rest of the world. Now it is only in music, verbal or other, that the feeling which plunges thought into confusion can be artistically expressed. Any attempt to deliver such music prosaically would be as absurd as an attempt to speak an oratorio of Handel's, repetitions and all. The right way to declaim Shakespeare is the sing-song way. Mere metric accuracy is nothing. There must be beauty of tone, expressive inflection, and infinite variety of *nuance* to sustain the fascination of the infinite monotony of the chanting.

Miss Janet Achurch, now playing Cleopatra in Manchester, has a magnificent voice, and is as full of ideas as to vocal effects as to everything else on the stage. The march of the verse and the strenuousness of the rhetoric stimulate her great artistic susceptibility powerfully: she is determined that Cleopatra shall have rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, and that she shall have music wherever she goes. Of the hardihood of ear with which she carries out her original and often audacious conceptions of Shakespearean music I am too utterly unnerved to give any adequate

description. The lacerating discord of her wailings is in my tormented ears as I write, reconciling me to the grave. It is as if she had been excited by the Hallelujah Chorus to dance on the keyboard of a great organ with all the stops pulled out. I cannot — dare not — dwell on it. I admit that when she is using the rich middle of her voice in a quite normal and unstudied way, intent only on the feeling of the passage, the effect leaves nothing to be desired; but the moment she raises the pitch to carry out some deeply planned vocal masterstroke, or is driven by Shakespeare himself to attempt a purely musical execution of a passage for which no other sort of execution is possible, then — well then, hold on tightly to the elbows of your stall, and bear it like a man. And when the feat is accompanied, as it sometimes is, by bold experiments in facial expression which all the passions of Cleopatra, complicated by seventy-times-sevenfold demoniacal possession, could but faintly account for, the eye has to share the anguish of the ear instead of consoling it with Miss Achurch's beauty. I have only seen the performance once; and I would not unsee it again if I could; but none the less I am a broken man after it. I may retain always an impression that I have actually looked on Cleopatra enthroned dead in her regal robes, with her hand on Antony's, and her awful eyes inhibiting the victorious Cæsar. I grant that this "resolution" of the discord is grand and memorable; but oh! how infernal the discord was whilst it was still unresolved! That is the word that sums up the objection to Miss Achurch's Cleopatra in point of sound: it is discordant.

I need not say that at some striking points Miss Achurch's performance shows the same exceptional in-

ventiveness and judgment in acting as her Ibsen achievements did, and that her energy is quite on the grand scale of the play. But even if we waive the whole musical question — and that means waiving the better half of Shakespeare — she would still not be Cleopatra. Cleopatra says that the man who has seen her "hath seen some majesty, and should know." One conceives her as a trained professional queen, able to put on at will the deliberate artificial dignity which belongs to the technique of court life. She may keep it for state occasions, like the unaffected Catherine of Russia, or always retain it, like Louis XIV, in whom affectation was nature; but that she should have no command of it — that she should rely in modern republican fashion on her personal force, with a frank contempt for ceremony and artificiality, as Miss Achurch does, is to spurn her own part. And then, her beauty is not the beauty of Cleopatra. I do not mean merely that she is not "with Phœbus' amorous pinches black," or brown, bean-eyed and pickaxe-faced. She is not even the English (or Anglo-Jewish) Cleopatra, the serpent of old Thames. She is of the broad-browed, column-necked, Germanic type — the Wagner heroine type — which in England, where it must be considered as the true racial heroic type, has given us two of our most remarkable histrionic geniuses in Miss Achurch herself and our dramatic singer, Miss Marie Brema, both distinguished by great voices, busy brains, commanding physical energy, and untamable impetuosity and originality. Now this type has its limitations, one of them being that it has not the genius of worthlessness, and so cannot present it on the stage otherwise than as comic depravity or masterful wickedness. Adversity makes it superhuman, not subhuman,

as it makes Cleopatra. When Miss Achurch comes on one of the weak, treacherous, affected streaks in Cleopatra, she suddenly drops from an Egyptian warrior queen into a naughty English petite bourgeoise, who carries off a little greediness and a little voluptuousness by a very unheroic sort of prettiness. That is, she treats it as a stroke of comedy; and as she is not a comedian, the stroke of comedy becomes in her hands a bit of fun. When the bourgeoise turns into a wild cat, and literally snarls and growls menacingly at the bearer of the news of Antony's marriage with Octavia, she is at least more Cleopatra; but when she masters herself, as Miss Achurch does, not in gipsy fashion, but by a heroic-grandiose act of self-mastery, quite foreign to the nature of the "triple turned wanton" (as Mr. Calvert bowdlerizes it) of Shakespeare, she is presently perplexed by fresh strokes of comedy —

> "He 's very knowing.
> I do perceive 't: there 's nothing in her yet:
> The fellow has good judgment."

At which what can she do but relapse farcically into the bourgeoise again, since it is not on the heroic side of her to feel elegantly self-satisfied whilst she is saying mean and silly things, as the true Cleopatra does? Miss Achurch's finest feat in this scene was the terrible look she gave the messenger when he said, in dispraise of Octavia, "And I do think she 's thirty" — Cleopatra being of course much more. Only, as Miss Achurch had taken good care not to look more, the point was a little lost on Manchester. Later on she is again quite in her heroic element (and out of Cleopatra's) in making Antony fight by sea. Her "I have

sixty sails, Cæsar none better," and her overbearing of the counsels of Enobarbus and Canidius to fight by land are effective, but effective in the way of a Boadicea, worth ten guzzling Antonys. There is no suggestion of the petulant folly of the spoiled beauty who has not imagination enough to know that she will be frightened when the fighting begins. Consequently when the audience, already puzzled as to how to take Cleopatra, learns that she has run away from the battle, and afterwards that she has sold Antony to Cæsar, it does not know what to think. The fact is, Miss Achurch steals Antony's thunder and Shakespeare's thunder and Ibsen's thunder and her own thunder so that she may ride the whirlwind for the evening; and though this *Walkürenritt* is intense and imposing, in spite of the discords, the lapses into farce, and the failure in comedy and characterization — though once or twice a really memorable effect is reached — yet there is not a stroke of Cleopatra in it; and I submit that to bring an ardent Shakespearean like myself all the way to Manchester to see "Antony and Cleopatra" with Cleopatra left out, even with Brynhild-cum-Nora Helmer substituted, is a very different matter to bringing down soft-hearted persons like Mr. Clement Scott and Mr. William Archer, who have allowed Miss Achurch to make Ibsen-and-Wagner pie of our poor Bard's historical masterpiece without a word of protest.

And yet all that I have said about Miss Achurch's Cleopatra cannot convey half the truth to those who have not seen Mr. Louis Calvert's Antony. It is on record that Antony's cooks put a fresh boar on the spit every hour, so that he should never have to wait long for his dinner. Mr. Calvert looks as if he not

only had the boars put on the spit, but ate them. He is inexcusably fat: Mr. Bourchier is a sylph by comparison. You will conclude, perhaps, that his fulness of habit makes him ridiculous as a lover. But not at all. It is only your rhetorical tragedian whose effectiveness depends on the oblatitude of his waistcoat. Mr. Calvert is a comedian — brimming over with genuine humane comedy. His one really fine tragic effect is the burst of laughter at the irony of fate with which, as he lies dying, he learns that the news of Cleopatra's death, on the receipt of which he mortally wounded himself, is only one of her theatrical sympathy-catching lies. As a lover, he leaves his Cleopatra far behind. His features are so pleasant, his manner so easy, his humor so genial and tolerant, and his portliness so frank and unashamed, that no good-natured woman could resist him; and so the topsiturvitude of the performance culminates in the plainest evidence that Antony is the seducer of Cleopatra instead of Cleopatra of Antony. Only at one moment was Antony's girth awkward. When Eros, who was a slim and rather bony young man, fell on his sword, the audience applauded sympathetically. But when Antony in turn set about the Happy Despatch, the consequences suggested to the imagination were so awful that shrieks of horror arose in the pit; and it was a relief when Antony was borne off by four stalwart soldiers, whose sinews cracked audibly as they heaved him up from the floor.

Here, then, we have Cleopatra tragic in her comedy, and Antony comedic in his tragedy. We have Cleopatra heroically incapable of flattery or flirtation, and Antony with a wealth of blarney in every twinkle of his eye and every fold of his chin. We have, to boot,

certain irrelevant but striking projections of Miss Achurch's genius, and a couple of very remarkable stage pictures invented by the late Charles Calvert. But in so far as we have "Antony and Cleopatra," we have it partly through the genius of the author, who imposes his conception on us through the dialogue in spite of everything that can be done to contradict him, and partly through the efforts of the secondary performers.

Of these Mr. George F. Black, who plays Octavius Cæsar, speaks blank verse rightly, if a little roughly, and can find his way to the feeling of the line by its cadence. Mr. Mollison — who played Henry IV here to Mr. Tree's Falstaff — is Enobarbus, and spouts the description of the barge with all the honors. The minor parts are handled with the spirit and intelligence that can always be had by a manager who really wants them. A few of the actors are certainly very bad; but they suffer rather from an insane excess of inspiration than from apathy. Charmian and Iras (Miss Ada Mellon and Miss Maria Fauvet) produce an effect out of all proportion to their scanty lines by the conviction and loyalty with which they support Miss Achurch; and I do not see why Cleopatra should ungratefully take Iras' miraculous death as a matter of course by omitting the lines beginning "Have I the aspic in my lips?" nor why Charmian should be robbed of her fine reply to the Roman's "Charmian, is this well done?" "It is well done, and fitted for a princess descended of so many royal kings." No doubt the Cleopatras of the palmy days objected to any one but themselves dying effectively, and so such cuts became customary; but the objection does not apply to the scene as arranged in Manchester. Modern managers

should never forget that if they take care of the minor actors the leading ones will take care of themselves.

May I venture to suggest to Dr. Henry Watson that his incidental music, otherwise irreproachable, is in a few places much too heavily scored to be effectively spoken through? Even in the entr'actes the brass might be spared in view of the brevity of the intervals and the almost continuous strain for three hours on the ears of the audience. If the music be revived later as a concert suite, the wind can easily be restored.

Considering that the performance requires an efficient orchestra and chorus, plenty of supernumeraries, ten or eleven distinct scenes, and a cast of twenty-four persons, including two leading parts of the first magnitude; that the highest price charged for admission is three shillings; and that the run is limited to eight weeks, the production must be counted a triumph of management. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that any London manager could have made a revival of "Antony and Cleopatra" more interesting. Certainly none of them would have planned that unforgettable statue death for Cleopatra, for which, I suppose, all Miss Achurch's sins against Shakespeare will be forgiven her. I begin to have hopes of a great metropolitan vogue for that lady now, since she has at last done something that is thoroughly wrong from beginning to end.

MEREDITH ON COMEDY

An Essay on Comedy. By George Meredith. Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co. 1897.

TWENTY years ago Mr. George Meredith delivered a lecture at the London Institution on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit. It was afterwards published in the "New Quarterly Magazine," and now reappears as a brown buckram book, obtainable at the inconsiderable price (considering the quality) of five shillings. It is an excellent, even superfine, essay, by perhaps the highest living English authority on its subject. And Mr. Meredith is quite conscious of his eminence. Speaking of the masters of the comedic spirit (if I call it, as he does, the Comic Spirit, this darkened generation will suppose me to refer to the animal spirits of tomfools and merry-andrews), he says, "Look there for your unchallengeable upper class." He should know; for he certainly belongs to it. At the first page I recognize the true connoisseur, and know that I have only to turn it to come on the great name of Molière, who has hardly been mentioned in London during the last twenty years by the dramatic critics, except as representing a quaint habit of the Comédie Française. That being so, why republish an essay on comedy now? Who cares for comedy to-day? — who knows what it is? — how many readers of Mr. Meredith's perfectly straightforward and accurate account of the wisest and most exquisite of the arts will see anything in the book but a brilliant sally of table talk about old plays, to be enjoyed, without practical application, as one of the rockets in

the grand firework display of contemporary *belles lettres?*

However, since the thing is done, and the book out, I take leave to say that Mr. Meredith knows more about plays than about playgoers. "The English public," he says, "have the basis of the comic in them: an esteem for common sense." This flattering illusion does not dupe Mr. Meredith completely; for I notice that he adds "taking them generally." But if it were to be my last word on earth I must tell Mr. Meredith to his face that whether you take them generally or particularly — whether in the lump, or sectionally as playgoers, churchgoers, voters, and what not — they are everywhere united and made strong by the bond of their common nonsense, their invincible determination to tell and be told lies about everything, and their power of dealing acquisitively and successfully with facts whilst keeping them, like disaffected slaves, rigidly in their proper place: that is, outside the moral consciousness. The Englishman is the most successful man in the world simply because he values success — meaning money and social precedence — more than anything else, especially more than fine art, his attitude towards which, culture-affectation apart, is one of half-diffident, half-contemptuous curiosity, and of course more than clear-headedness, spiritual insight, truth, justice, and so forth. It is precisely this unscrupulousness and singleness of purpose that constitutes the Englishman's pre-eminent "common sense"; and this sort of common sense, I submit to Mr. Meredith, is not only not "the basis of the comic," but actually makes comedy impossible, because it would not seem like common sense at all if it were not self-satisfiedly unconscious of its moral and intellectual bluntness, whereas

the function of comedy is to dispel such unconsciousness by turning the searchlight of the keenest moral and intellectual analysis right on to it. Now the Frenchman, the Irishman, the American, the ancient Greek, is disabled from this true British common sense by intellectual virtuosity, leading to a love of accurate and complete consciousness of things — of intellectual mastery of them. This produces a positive enjoyment of disillusion (the most dreaded and hated of calamities in England), and consequently a love of comedy (the fine art of disillusion) deep enough to make huge sacrifices of dearly idealized institutions to it. Thus, in France, Molière was allowed to destroy the Marquises. In England he could not have shaken even such titles as the accidental sheriff's knighthood of the late Sir Augustus Harris. And yet the Englishman thinks himself much more independent, level-headed, and genuinely republican than the Frenchman — not without good superficial reasons; for nations with the genius of comedy often carry all the snobbish ambitions and idealist enthusiasms of the Englishman to an extreme which the Englishman himself laughs at. But they sacrifice them to comedy, to which the Englishman sacrifices nothing; so that, in the upshot, aristocracies, thrones and churches go by the board at the attack of comedy among our devotedly conventional, loyal and fanatical next-door neighbors, whilst we, having absolutely no disinterested regard for such institutions, draw a few of their sharpest teeth, and then maintain them determinedly as part of the machinery of worldly success.

The Englishman prides himself on this anti-comedic common sense of his as at least eminently practical. As a matter of fact, it is just as often as not most

pigheadedly unpractical. For example, electric telegraphy, telephony and traction are invented, and establish themselves as necessities of civilized life. The unpractical foreigner recognizes the fact, and takes the obvious step of putting up poles in his streets to carry wires. This expedient never occurs to the Briton. He wastes leagues of wire and does unheard-of damage to property by tying his wires and posts to such chimney stacks as he can beguile householders into letting him have access to. Finally, when it comes to electric traction, and the housetops are out of the question, he suddenly comes out in the novel character of an amateur in urban picturesqueness, and declares that the necessary cable apparatus would spoil the appearance of our streets. The streets of Nuremberg, the heights of Fiesole, may not be perceptibly the worse for these contrivances; but the beauty of Tottenham Court Road is too sacred to be so profaned: to its loveliness the strained bus-horse and his offal are the only accessories endurable by the beauty-loving Cockney eye. This is your common-sense Englishman. His helplessness in the face of electricity is typical of his helplessness in the face of everything else that lies outside the set of habits he calls his opinions and capacities. In the theatre he is the same. It is not common sense to laugh at your own prejudices: it is common sense to feel insulted when any one else laughs at them. Besides, the Englishman is a serious person: that is, he is firmly persuaded that his prejudices and stupidities are the vital material of civilization, and that it is only by holding on to their moral prestige with the stiffest resolution that the world is saved from flying back into savagery and gorilladom, which he always conceives, in spite of natural history, as a con-

dition of lawlessness and promiscuity, instead of, as it actually is, the extremity, long since grown unbearable, of his own notions of law and order, morality and conventional respectability. Thus he is a moralist, an ascetic, a Christian, a truth-teller and a plain dealer by profession and by conviction; and it is wholly against this conviction that, judged by his own canons, he finds himself in practice a great rogue, a liar, an unconscionable pirate, a grinder of the face of the poor, and a libertine. Mr. Meredith points out daintily that the cure for this self-treasonable confusion and darkness is Comedy, whose spirit overhead will "look humanely malign and cast an oblique light on them, followed by volleys of silvery laughter." Yes, Mr. Meredith; but suppose the patients have "common sense" enough not to want to be cured! Suppose they realize the immense commercial advantage of keeping their ideal life and their practical business life in two separate conscience-tight compartments, which nothing but "the Comic Spirit" can knock into one! Suppose, therefore, they dread the Comic Spirit more than anything else in the world, shrinking from its "illumination," and considering its "silvery laughter" in execrable taste! Surely in doing so they are only carrying out the common-sense view, in which an encouragement and enjoyment of comedy must appear as silly and suicidal and "unEnglish" as the conduct of the man who sets fire to his own house for the sake of seeing the flying sparks, the red glow in the sky, the fantastic shadows on the walls, the excitement of the crowd, the gleaming charge of the engines, and the dismay of the neighbors. No doubt the day will come when we shall deliberately burn a London street every day to keep our city up to date in health and hand-

someness, with no more misgiving as to our common sense than we now have when sending our clothes to the laundry every week. When that day comes, perhaps comedy will be popular too; for after all the function of comedy, as Mr. Meredith after twenty years' further consideration is perhaps by this time ripe to admit, is nothing less than the destruction of old-established morals. Unfortunately, to-day such iconoclasm can be tolerated by our playgoing citizens only as a counsel of despair and pessimism. They can find a dreadful joy in it when it is done seriously, or even grimly and terribly as they understand Ibsen to be doing it; but that it should be done with levity, with silvery laughter like the crackling of thorns under a pot, is too scandalously wicked, too cynical, too heartlessly shocking to be borne. Consequently our plays must either be exploitations of old-established morals or tragic challengings of the order of Nature. Reductions to absurdity, however logical; banterings, however kindly; irony, however delicate, merriment, however silvery, are out of the question in matters of morality, except among men with a natural appetite for comedy which must be satisfied at all costs and hazards: that is to say, *not* among the English playgoing public, which positively dislikes comedy.

No doubt it is patriotically indulgent of Mr. Meredith to say that "Our English school has not clearly imagined society," and that "of the mind hovering above congregated men and women it has imagined nothing." But is he quite sure that the audiences of our English school do not know too much about society and "congregated men and women" to encourage any exposures from "the vigilant Comic," with its "thoughtful laughter," its "oblique illumination," and

the rest of it? May it not occur to the purchasers of half-guinea stalls that it is bad enough to have to put up with the pryings of Factory Inspectors, Public Analysts, County Council Inspectors, Chartered Accountants and the like, without admitting this Comic Spirit to look into still more delicate matters? Is it clear that the Comic Spirit would break into silvery laughter if it saw all that the nineteenth century has to show it beneath the veneer? There is Ibsen, for instance: he is not lacking, one judges, in the Comic Spirit; yet his laughter does not sound very silvery, does it? No: if this were an age for comedies, Mr. Meredith would have been asked for one before this. How would a comedy from him be relished, I wonder, by the people who wanted to have the revisers of the Authorized Version of the Bible prosecuted for blasphemy because they corrected as many of its mistranslations as they dared, and who reviled Froude for not suppressing Carlyle's diary and writing a fictitious biography of him, instead of letting out the truth? Comedy, indeed! I drop the subject with a hollow laugh.

The recasting of "A Pierrot's Life" at the matinées at the Prince of Wales' Theatre greatly increases and solidifies the attraction of the piece. Felicia Mallet now plays Pierrot; but we can still hang on the upturned nose of the irresistible Litini, who reappears as Fifine. Litini was certainly a charming Pierrot; but the delicate, subtle charm was an intensely feminine one, and only incorporated itself dreamily with the drama in the tender shyness of the first act and the pathos of the last. Litini as a vulgar drunkard and gambler was as fantastically impossible as an angel at a horse-race. Felicia Mallet is much more credible,

much more realistic, and therefore much more intelligible — also much less slim, and not quite so youthful. Litini was like a dissolute "La Sylphide": Mallet is frankly and heartily like a scion of the very smallest bourgeoisie sowing his wild oats. She is a good observer, a smart executant, and a vigorous and sympathetic actress, apparently quite indifferent to romantic charm, and intent only on the dramatic interest, realistic illusion, and comic force of her work. And she avoids the conventional gesture-code of academic Italian pantomime, depending on popularly graphic methods throughout. The result is that the piece is now much fuller of incident, much more exciting in the second act (hitherto the weak point) and much more vivid than before. Other changes have helped to bring this about. Jacquinet, no longer ridiculously condemned to clothe a Parisian three-card-trick man in the attire of the fashionable lover in "L'Enfant Prodigue," appears in his proper guise with such success that it is difficult to believe that he is the same person. Miss Ella Dee is a much prettier Louisette, as prettiness is reckoned in London, than her predecessor, whom she also surpasses in grace and variety of expression. Litini is a brilliant Fifine — the brevity of the part is regretted for the first time; and Rossi, though he is no better than before, probably would be if he had left any room for improvement. The band is excellent, and the music clever and effective, though it has none of those topical allusions which are so popular here — strangely popular, considering that the public invariably misses nine out of ten of them (who, for instance, has noticed that entr'acte in "Saucy Sally" in which the bassoon plays all manner of rollicking nautical airs as florid counterpoints to "Tom Bowling"? Alto-

gether the "play without words" is now at its best. One must be a critic to understand the blessedness of going to the theatre without having to listen to slipshod dialogue and affectedly fashionable or nasally stagey voices. Merely to see plastic figures and expressive looks and gestures is a delicious novelty to me; but I believe some of the public rather resent having to pay full price for a play without words, exactly as they resent having to pay for a doctor's advice without getting a bottle of nasty medicine along with it. Some of these unhappy persons may be observed waiting all through the performance for the speaking to begin, and retiring at last with loud expressions of disappointment at having been sold by the management. For my part, I delight in these wordless plays, though I am conscious of the difficulty of making any but the most threadbare themes intelligible to the public without words. In my youth the difficulty could have been got over by taking some story that every one knew; but nowadays nobody knows any stories. If you put the "Sleeping Beauty" on the stage in dumb show, the only thing you could depend on the whole house knowing about her would be her private name and address, her salary, her engagements for next year, her favorite pastimes, and the name of her pet dog.

MR. PINERO ON TURNING FORTY

The Physician: a new play of modern life in four acts, by Henry Arthur Jones. Criterion Theatre, 25 March, 1897.
The Princess and the Butterfly, or The Fantastics: an original comedy in five acts, by Arthur W. Pinero. St. James's Theatre, 29 March, 1895.

WHEN I was a fastidious youth, my elders, ever eager to confer bad advice on me and to word it with disgusting homeliness, used to tell me never to throw away dirty water until I got in clean. To which I would reply that as I had only one bucket, the thing was impossible. So until I grew middle-aged and sordid, I acted on the philosophy of Bunyan's couplet: —

> "A man there was, tho' some did count him mad,
> The more he cast away, the more he had."

Indeed, in the matter of ideals, faiths, convictions and the like, I was of opinion that Nature abhorred a vacuum, and that you might empty your bucket boldly with the fullest assurance that you would find it fuller than ever before you had time to set it down again. But herein I youthfully deceived myself. I grew up to find the genteel world full of persons with empty buckets. Now The Physician is a man with an empty bucket. "By God!" he says (he does n't believe in God), "I don't believe there 's in any London slum, or jail, or workhouse, a poor wretch with such a horrible despair in his heart as I have to-day. I tell you I 've caught the disease of our time, of our society, of our

civilization — middle age, disillusionment. My youth 's gone. My beliefs are gone. I enjoy nothing. I believe in nothing. Belief! That 's the placebo I want. That would cure me. My work means nothing to me. Success means nothing to me. I cure people with a grin and a sneer. I keep on asking myself, ' To what end? To what end? ' "

O dear! Have we not had enough of this hypochondriasis from our immortal bard in verse which — we have it on his own authority — " not marble, nor the gilded monuments of princes, shall outlive "? It is curable by Mr. Meredith's prescription — the tonic of comedy; and when I see a comedian of Mr. Wyndham's skill and a dramatist of Mr. Jones's mother-wit entering into a physicianly conspiracy to trade in the disease it is their business to treat, I abandon all remorse, flatly refuse to see any " sympathetic " drama in a mere shaking of the head at life, and vow that at least one of Dr. Carey's audience shall tell him that there is nothing in the world more pitiably absurd than the man who goes about telling his friends that life is not worth living, when they know perfectly well that if he meant it he could stop living much more easily than go on eating. Even the incorrigible Hamlet admitted this, and made his excuse for not resorting to the bare bodkin; but Dr. Carey, who says " I never saw a man's soul," has not Hamlet's excuse. His superstitions are much cruder: they do not rise above those of an African witch-finder or Sioux medicine-man. He pretends to " cure " diseases — Mother Carey is much like Mother Seigel in this respect — and holds up a test-tube, whispering, " I fancy I 'm on the track of the cancer microbe: I 'm not sure I have n't got my gentleman here." At which abject depth of nineteenth-

century magicianism he makes us esteem Dr. Diafoirus and the Apothecary in "Romeo and Juliet" as, in comparison, dazzling lights of science.

And now, as if it were not bad enough to have Mr. Jones in this state of mind, we have Mr. Pinero, who was born, as I learn from a recent biographic work of reference, in 1855, quite unable to get away from the same tragic preoccupation with the horrors of middle age. He has launched at us a play in five acts — two and a half of them hideously superfluous — all about being over forty. The heroine is forty, and can talk about nothing else. The hero is over forty, and is blind to every other fact in the universe. Having this topic of conversation in common, they get engaged in order that they may save one another from being seduced by the attraction of youth into foolish marriages. They then fall in love, she with a fiery youth of twenty-eight, he with a meteoric girl of eighteen. Up to the last moment I confess I had sufficient confidence in Mr. Pinero's saving sense of humor to believe that he would give the verdict against himself, and admit that the meteoric girl was too young for the hero (twenty-seven years' discrepancy) and the heroine too old for the fiery youth (thirteen years' discrepancy). But no: he gravely decided that the heart that loves never ages; and now perhaps he will write us another drama, limited strictly to three acts, with, as heroine, the meteoric girl at forty with her husband at sixty-seven, and, as hero, the fiery youth at forty-nine with his wife at sixty-two.

Mr. Henry Arthur Jones is reconciled to his own fate, though he cannot bear to see it overtake a woman. Hear Lady Val in his play! "I smell autumn; I scent it from afar. I ask myself how many years shall I

have a man for my devoted slave. . . . Oh, my God, Lewin [she is an Atheist], it never can be worth while for a woman to live one moment after she has ceased to be loved." This, I admit, is as bad as Mr. Pinero: the speech is actually paraphrased by Mr. St. Roche in the St. James's play. But mark the next sentence: "And you men have the laugh of us. Age does n't wither you or stale your insolent, victorious, self-satisfied, smirking, commonplace durability! Oh, you brutes, I hate you all, because you 're warranted to wash and wear for fifty years." Observe, *fifty* years, not forty. I turn again to my book of reference, and find, as I expected, that Mr. Jones was born in 1851. I discover also that I myself was born in 1856. And this is '97. Well, my own opinion is that sixty is the prime of life for a man. Cheer up, Mr. Pinero: courage, Henry Arthur! "What though the gray do something mingle with our younger brown" (excuse my quoting Shakespeare), the world is as young as ever. Go look at the people in Oxford Street: they are always the same age.

As regards any conscious philosophy of life, I am bound to say that there is not so much (if any) difference between Mr. Jones and Mr. Pinero as the very wide differences between them in other respects would lead us to suppose. The moment their dramatic inventiveness flags, and they reach the sentimentally reflective interval between genuine creation and the breaking off work until next day, they fall back on the two great Shakespearean grievances — namely, that we cannot live for ever and that life is not worth living. And then they strike up the old tunes — "Out, out, brief candle!" "Vanitas vanitatum," "To what end?" and so on. But in their fertile, live movements they

are as unlike as two men can be in the same profession. At such time Mr. Pinero has no views at all. Our novelists, especially those of the Thackeray Trollope period, have created a fictitious world for him; and it is about this world that he makes up stage stories for us. If he observes life, he does so as a gentleman observes the picturesqueness of a gipsy. He presents his figures coolly, clearly, and just as the originals like to conceive themselves — for instance, his ladies and gentlemen are not real ladies and gentlemen, but ladies and gentlemen as they themselves (mostly modelling themselves on fiction) aim at being; and so Bayswater and Kensington have a sense of being understood by Mr. Pinero. Mr. Jones, on the other hand, works passionately from the real. By throwing himself sympathetically into his figures he gives them the stir of life; but he also often raises their energy to the intensity of his own, and confuses their feelings with the revolt of his own against them. Above all, by forcing to the utmost their aspect as they really are as against their pose, he makes their originals protest violently that he cannot draw them — a protest formerly made, on exactly the same grounds, against Dickens. For example, Lady Val in " The Physician " is a study of a sort of clever fashionable woman now current; but it is safe to say that no clever fashionable woman, nor any admirer of clever fashionable women, will ever admit the truth or good taste of the likeness. And yet she is very carefully studied from life, and only departs from it flatteringly in respect of a certain energy of vision and intensity of conscience that belong to Mr. Jones and not in the least to herself.

Compare with Lady Val the Princess Pannonia in Mr. Pinero's play. You will be struck instantly with

the comparative gentlemanliness of Mr. Pinero. He seems to say, "Dear lady, do not be alarmed: I will show just enough of your weaknesses to make you interesting; but otherwise I shall take you at your own valuation and make the most of you. I shall not forget that you are a Princess from the land of novels. My friend Jones, who would have made an excellent Dissenting clergyman, has a vulgar habit of bringing persons indiscriminately to the bar of his convictions as to what is needful for the life and welfare of the real world. You need apprehend no such liberties from me. I have no convictions, no views, no general ideas of any kind: I am simply a dramatic artist, only too glad to accept a point of view from which you are delightful. At the same time, I am not insensible to the great and tragic issues that meet us wherever we turn. For instance, it is hardly possible to reach the age of forty without &c. &c. &c." And accordingly you have a cool, tasteful, polished fancy picture which reflects the self-consciousness of Princesses and the illusions of their imitators much more accurately than if Mr. Jones had painted it.

The two plays present an extraordinary contrast in point of dramatic craft. It is no exaggeration to say that within two minutes from the rising of the curtain Mr. Jones has got tighter hold of his audience and further on with his play than Mr. Pinero within two hours. During those two hours, "The Princess" marks time complacently on the interest, pathos, the suggestiveness, the awful significance of turning forty. The Princess has done it; Sir George Lamorant has done it; Mrs. St. Roche has done it; so has her husband. Lady Chichele, Lady Ringstead, and Mrs. Sabiston have all done it. And they have all to meditate on it like

Hamlet meditating on suicide; only, since soliloquies are out of fashion, nearly twenty persons have to be introduced to listen to them. The resultant exhibition of High Life Above Stairs is no doubt delightful to the people who had rather read the fashionable intelligence than my articles. To me not even the delight of playing Peeping Tom whilst Princess Pannonia was getting out of bed and flattering me with a vain hope that the next item would be her bath, could reconcile me to two hours of it. If the women had worn some tolerable cap-and-apron uniform I could have borne it better; but those dreadful dresses, mostly out of character and out of complexion — I counted nine failures to four successes — upset my temper, which was not restored by a witless caricature of Mr. Max Beerbohm (would he had written it himself!), or by the spectacle of gilded youth playing with toys whilst Sir George Lamorant put on a fool's cap and warned them that they would all be forty-five presently, or even by the final tableau, unspeakably sad to the British mind, of the host and hostess retiring for the night to separate apartments instead of tucking themselves respectably and domestically into the same feather bed. Yet who shall say that there is no comedy in the spectacle of Mr. Pinero moralizing, and the public taking his reflections seriously? He is much more depressing when he makes a gentleman throw a glass of water at another gentleman in a drawing-room, thereby binding the other gentleman in honor to attack his assailant in the street with a walking stick, whereupon the twain go to France to fight a duel for all the world as if they were at the Surrey Theatre. However, when this is over the worst is over. Mr. Pinero gets to business at about ten o'clock, and the play begins in the middle of the third

act — a good, old-fashioned, well-seasoned bit of sentimental drawing-room fiction, daintily put together, and brightening at the end into a really lighthearted and amusing act of artificial comedy. So, though it is true that the man who goes to the St. James's Theatre now at 7.45 will wish he had never been born, none the less will the man who goes at 9.30 spend a very pleasant evening.

The two authors have not been equally fortunate in respect of casting. Half Mr. Jones's play — the women's half — is obliterated in performance. His Edana is a sterling, convinced girl-enthusiast. "Her face," says the Doctor, "glowed like a live coal." This sort of characterization cannot be effected on the stage by dialogue. Enthusiasts are magnetic, not by what they say, or even what they do, but by how they say and do it. Mr. Jones would write "yes" and "no"; but it rested with the actress whether the affirmation and denial should be that of an enthusiast or not. Edana at the Criterion is played by Miss Mary Moore. Now Miss Moore is a dainty light comedian; and her intelligence, and a certain power of expressing grief rather touchingly and prettily, enable her to take painful parts on occasion without making herself ridiculous. But they do not enable her to play an enthusiast. Consequently her Edana is a simple substitution of what she can do for what she is required to do. The play is not only weakened by this — all plays get weakened somewhere when they are performed — it is dangerously confused, because Edana, instead of being a stronger character than Lady Val, and therefore conceivably able to draw the physician away from her, is just the sort of person who would stand no chance against her with such a man. To make matters worse,

Lady Val is played by Miss Marion Terry, who is in every particular from her heels to her hairpins, exactly what Lady Val could not be, her qualities being even more fatal to the part than her faults. A more hopeless pair of misfits has never befallen an author. On the other hand, Mr. Jones has been exceptionally fortunate in his men. Mr. Alfred Bishop's parson and Mr. J. G. Taylor's Stephen Gurdon are perfect. Mr. Thalberg does what is wanted to set the piece going on the rising of the curtain with marked ability. The easy parts — which include some racy village studies — are well played. Mr. Leslie Kenyon, as Brooker, has the tact that is all the part requires; and the physician is played with the greatest ease by Mr. Wyndham himself, who will no doubt draw all Harley Street to learn what a consulting-room manner can be in the hands of an artist. The performance as a whole is exceptionally fine, the size of the theatre admitting of a delicacy of handling without which Mr. Jones's work loses half its sincerity.

In "The Princess" matters are better balanced. There is a fearful waste of power: out of twenty-nine performers, of whom half are accustomed to play important parts in London, hardly six have anything to do that could not be sufficiently well done by nobodies. Mr. Pinero seems to affirm his supremacy by being extravagant in his demands for the sake of extravagance; and Mr. Alexander plays up to him with an equally high hand by being no less extravagant in his compliances. So the piece is at all events not underplayed; and it has crowned the reputation of Miss Fay Davis, whose success, the most sensational achieved at the St. James's Theatre since that of Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Paula Tanqueray, is a success of cultivated

skill and self-mastery on the artist's part, and not one of the mere accidents of the stage. Miss Neilson, ever fair and fortunate, puts a pleasant face on a long and uninteresting part, all about the horrors of having reached forty without losing "the aroma of a stale girlhood." The Princess is ladylike and highly literary. When, in the familiar dilemma of the woman of forty with an inexperienced lover, she is forced to prevent his retiring in abashed depair by explaining to him that her terrifying fluster over his more personal advances only means that she likes them and wants some more, she choicely words it, "I would not have it otherwise." And his ardor is volcanic enough to survive even that. The lover's part falls to Mr. H. B. Irving, who is gaining steadily in distinction of style and strength of feeling. Mr. Alexander has little to do beyond what he has done often before — make himself interesting enough to conceal the emptiness of his part. He laments his forty-five years as mercifully as such a thing may be done; and he secures toleration for the silly episodes of the fool's cap and the quarrel with Maxime. Mr. Esmond makes the most of a comic scrap of character; and Miss Rose Leclercq is duly exploited in the conventional manner as Lady Ringstead. Miss Patty Bell's Lady Chichele is not bad: the rest I must pass over from sheer exhaustion.

MADAME SANS-GÊNE

Madame Sans-Gêne: a comedy in a prologue and three acts. By MM. Sardou and Moreau. Translated by J. Comyns Carr. Lyceum Theatre, 10 April, 1896.

IT is rather a nice point whether Miss Ellen Terry should be forgiven for sailing the Lyceum ship into the shallows of Sardoodledom for the sake of Madame Sans-Gêne. But hardly any controversy has arisen on this point: every one seems content to discuss how Miss Ellen Terry can bring herself to impersonate so vulgar a character. And the verdict is that she has surmounted the difficulty wonderfully. In that verdict I can take no part, because I do not admit the existence of the difficulty. Madame Sans-Gêne is *not* a vulgar person; and Miss Ellen Terry knows it. No doubt most people will not agree with Miss Ellen Terry. But if most people could see everything that Miss Ellen Terry sees, they would all be Ellen Terries instead of what they are.

I know that it will not be conceded to me without a struggle that a washerwoman who spits on her iron and tells her employees to "stir their stumps" is not vulgar. Let me, therefore, ask those persons of unquestioned fashion who have taken to bicycling, what they do when they find their pneumatic tires collapsing ten miles from anywhere, and wish to ascertain, before undertaking the heavy labor of looking for a puncture, whether the valve is not leaking. The workman's way of doing this is no trade secret. He puts a film of moisture on the end of the valve, and watches whether that film is converted into a bubble by an escape of

air. And he gets the moisture exactly where Madame Sans-Gêne gets the moisture for her flat iron. It may be that the washerwoman of the future, as soon as a trebling of her wages and a halving of her hours of labor enable her to indulge in a little fastidiousness, will hang a scent bottle with a spray diffuser at her chatelaine, though even then I doubt if the fashionable cyclist will prefer the resources of civilization to those of nature when nobody is looking. But by that time the washerwoman will no doubt smoke cigarettes, as to which habit of tobacco smoking, in what form soever it be practised, I will say nothing more than that the people who indulge in it, whether male or female, have clearly no right to complain of the manners of people who spit on flat irons. Indeed I will go further, and declare that a civilization which enjoins the deliberate stiffening of its shirts with white mud and the hot-pressing thereof in order that men may look in the evening like silhouettes cut out of mourning paper, has more to learn than to teach in the way of good manners (that is, good sense) from Madame Sans-Gêne.

As to "stir your stumps," that is precisely what an ideal duchess would say if she had to bustle a laundry, and had tact and geniality enough to make a success of it. It is true that she might as easily say, "More diligence, ladies, please"; but she would not say it, because ideal duchesses do not deliberately say stupid and underbred things. Indeed our military officers, whose authority in matters of social propriety nobody will dispute, are apt to push the Sans-Gêne style to extremes in smartening the movements of Volunteers and others in reviews and inspections, to say nothing of the emergencies of actual warfare.

Concerning Madame Sans-Gêne's use of slang, which

she carries to the extent of remarking, when there is a question of her husband being compelled by the Emperor to divorce her and marry a more aristocratic but slenderer woman, "You like 'em crumby, don't you?", I can only say that her practice is in accord with that of the finest masters of language. I have known and conversed with men whose command of English, and sense of beauty and fitness in the use of it, had made them famous. They all revelled in any sort of language that was genuinely vernacular, racy and graphic. They were just as capable as Madame Sans-Gêne of calling a nose a snout or a certain sort of figure crumby; and between such literary solemnities as "magistrate" or "policeman" and the slang "beak" or the good English "copper" they would not have hesitated for a moment on familiar occasions. And they would have been outraged in the last degree had they been represented as talking of "bereavements," "melancholy occasions," or any of the scores of pretentious insincerities, affectations and literary flourishes of tombstone, rastrum, shop-catalogue, foreign-policy-leading-article English which Miss Terry could pass off without a word of remonstrance as high-class conversation.

It is further objected that Miss Terry drops into the dialect of Whitechapel, or rather a sort of generalized country dialect with some Whitechapel tricks picked up and grafted on to it. Here I am coming on dangerous ground; for it is plain that criticism must sooner or later speak out fiercely about that hideous vulgarity of stage speech from which the Lyceum has long been almost our only refuge. It seems to me that actors and actresses never dream nowadays of learning to speak. What they do is this. Since in their

raw native state they are usually quite out of the question as plausible representatives of those galaxies of rank and fashion, the *dramatis personae* of our smart plays, and having no idea that the simple remedy is to learn the alphabet over again and learn it correctly, they take great pains to parrot a detestable convention of "smart" talking, supposed to represent refined speech by themselves and that huge majority of their audiences which knows no better, but actually a caricature of the affectations of the parvenu and the "outsider." Hence the common complaint among the better sort of gentlefolk that an evening at the theatre leaves an uncomfortable, almost outraged sensation of having been entrapped, like the Vicar of Wakefield, to a dinner-party at which the lords and ladies are really footmen and lady's-maids "showing off." The vulgarity of this convention is innocent compared to its unbearable monotony, fatal to that individuality without which no actor can interest an audience. All countries and districts send us parliamentary speakers who have cultivated the qualities of their native dialect and corrected its faults whilst aiming at something like a standard purity and clearness of speech. Take Mr. Gladstone for instance. For his purposes as an orator he has studied his speech as carefully and with as great powers of application as any actor. But he has never lost, and never wanted to lose, certain features of his speech which stamp him as a North-countryman. When Mr. T. P. O'Connor delivers a speech, he does not inflict on us the vulgarities of Beggar's Bush; but he preserves for us all the music of Galway, though he does not say "Yis" for "Yes" like a Galway peasant any more than he says "Now" (Nah-oo) for "No" like a would-be smart London actor. It is so with all

good speakers off the stage. Among good speakers the Irishman speaks like an Irishman, the Scotchman like a Scotchman, the American like an American, and so on. It should be so on the stage also, both in classical plays and representations of modern society, though of course it is the actor's business to assume dialects and drop or change them at will in character parts, and to be something of a virtuoso in speech in all parts. A very moderate degree of accomplishment in this direction would make an end of stage smart speech, which, like the got-up Oxford mince and drawl of a foolish curate, is the mark of a snob. Indeed, the brutal truth is that the English theatre is at present suffering severely from an epidemic of second-rate snobbery. From that, at least, we are spared whilst Miss Ellen Terry and Sir Henry Irving are on the stage.

It is natural for those who think this snobbishness a really fine and genuine accomplishment to conclude that everybody must lust after it, and, consequently, that Madame Sans-Gêne's neglect to acquire it in spite of her opportunities as Duchess of Dantzig is incredible. Now far be it from me to deny that Sardou's assumption that the Duchess has not learnt to make a curtsey or to put on a low-necked dress must be taken frankly as an impossible pretext for a bit of clowning which may or may not be worth its cost in verisimilitude. But, apart from this inessential episode, the idea that Catherine, being happily "Madame Sans-Gêne," should deliberately manufacture herself into a commonplace Court lady — a person with about as much political influence or genuine intimacy with ministers and princes as an upper housemaid in Downing Street — is to assume that she would gain by the exchange, and that

her ideals and ambitions are those of an average solicitor's wife.

Here, then, you have the secret of Madame Sans-Gêne and Miss Terry's apparent condescension to a "vulgar" part. There are a few people in the world with sufficient vitality and strength of character to get to close quarters with uncommon people quite independently of the drill which qualifies common people (whatever their rank) to figure in the retinue which is indispensable to the state of kings and ministers. And there are a few actresses who are able to interpret such exceptional people because they are exceptional themselves. Miss Terry is such an exceptional actress; and there the whole wonder of the business begins and ends. Granted this one rare qualification, the mere execution is nothing. The part does not take Miss Terry anywhere near the limit of her powers: on the contrary, it embarrasses her occasionally by its crudity. Rejane was also well within her best as Catherine; so that a comparison of the two artists is like comparing two athletes throwing the hammer ten feet. Miss Terry's difficulties are greater, because she has to make shift with a translation instead of the original text, and because her support, especially in the scenes with Lefebvre, is not so helpful as that enjoyed by Rejane. Also she coaxed the clowning scene through better than Rejane; and her retort upon the Queen of Naples, though it was perfectly genial and simple and laundress-like, set me wondering why we have never heard her deliver Marie Stuart's retort upon Elizabeth in Schiller's play, a speculation which Rejane certainly never suggested to me, and which I admit is not to the point. But, if there is to be any comparison, it must, as I have said, take us outside "Madame Sans-Gêne,"

into which both actresses put as much acting as it will hold.

Sardou's Napoleon is rather better than Madame Tussaud's, and that is all that can be said for it. It is easy to take any familiar stage figure, make him up as Napoleon, put into his mouth a few allusions to the time when he was a poor young artillery officer in Paris and to Friedland or Jena, place at his elbow a Sherlock Holmes called Fouché and so forth, just as in another dress, and with Friedland changed to Pharsalia, you would have a stage Julius Cæsar; but if at the end of the play the personage so dressed up has felt nothing and seen nothing and done nothing that might not have been as appropriately felt, seen and done by his valet, then the fact that the hero is called Emperor is no more important than the fact that the theatre, in nine cases out of ten, is called the Theatre Royal. On the other hand, if you get as your hero a prince of whom nobody ever heard before — say Hamlet — and make him genuinely distinguished, then he becomes as well known to us as Marcus Aurelius. Sardou's Napoleon belongs to the first variety. He is nothing but the jealous husband of a thousand fashionable dramas, talking Buonapartiana. Sir Henry Irving seizes the opportunity to show what can be done with an empty part by an old stage hand. The result is that he produces the illusion of the Emperor behind the part: one takes it for granted that his abstinence from any adequately Napoleonic deeds and utterances is a matter of pure forbearance on his part. It is an amusingly crafty bit of business, and reminds one pleasantly of the days before Shakespeare was let loose on Sir Henry Irving's talent.

Mr. Comyns Carr's translation is much too literary.

Catherine does not speak like a woman of the people except when she is helping herself out with ready-made locutions in the manner of Sancho Panza. After a long speech consisting of a bundle of such locutions padded with forced mistakes in grammar, she will say, "That was my object," or some similarly impossible piece of Ciceronian eloquence. It is a pity; for there never was a play more in need of an unerring sense of the vernacular and plenty of humorous adroitness in its use.

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN

John Gabriel Borkman: a play in four acts by Henrik Ibsen. English version by William Archer. Opening performance by the New Century Theatre at the Strand Theatre, 3 May, 1897.

THE first performance of "John Gabriel Borkman," the latest masterpiece of the acknowledged chief of European dramatic art, has taken place in London under the usual shabby circumstances. For the first scene in the gloomy Borkman house, a faded, soiled, dusty wreck of some gay French salon, originally designed, perhaps, for Offenbach's "Favart," was fitted with an incongruous Norwegian stove, a painted staircase, and a couple of chairs which were no doubt white and gold when they first figured in Tom Taylor's "Plot and Passion" or some other relic of the days before Mr. Bancroft revolutionized stage furniture, but have apparently languished ever since, unsold and unsalable, among second-hand keys, framed lithographs of the

Prince Consort, casual fireirons and stair-rods, and other spoils of the broker. Still, this scene at least was describable, and even stimulative — to irony. In Act II, the gallery in which Borkman prowls for eight years like a wolf was no gallery at all, but a square box ugly to loathsomeness, and too destructive to the imagination and descriptive faculty to incur the penalty of criticism. In Act III (requiring, it will be remembered, the shifting landscape from "Parsifal"), two new cloths specially painted, and good enough to produce a tolerable illusion of snowy pinewood and midnight mountain with proper accessories, were made ridiculous by a bare acre of wooden floor and only one set of wings for the two. When I looked at that, and thought of the eminence of the author and the greatness of his work, I felt ashamed. What Sir Henry Irving and Mr. George Alexander and Mr. Wilson Barrett feel about it I do not know — on the whole, perhaps, not altogether displeased to see Ibsen belittled. For my part, I beg the New Century Theatre, when the next Ibsen play is ready for mounting, to apply to me for assistance. If I have a ten-pound note, they shall have it: if not, I can at least lend them a couple of decent chairs. I cannot think that Mr. Massingham, Mr. Sutro, and Mr. William Archer would have grudged a few such contributions from their humble cots on this occasion if they had not hoped that a display of the most sordid poverty would have shamed the public as it shamed me. Unfortunately their moral lesson is more likely to discredit Ibsen than to fill the New Century coffers. They have spent either too little or too much. When Dr. Furnivall performed Browning's "Luria" in the lecture theatre at University College with a couple of curtains, a chair borrowed from the board-

room, and the actors in their ordinary evening dress, the absence of scenery was as completely forgotten as if we had all been in the Globe in Shakespeare's time. But between that and an adequate scenic equipment there is no middle course. It is highly honorable to the pioneers of the drama that they are poor; but in art, what poverty can only do unhandsomely and stingily it should not do at all. Besides, to be quite frank, I simply do not believe that the New Century Theatre could not have afforded at least a better couple of chairs.

I regret to say that the shortcomings of the scenery were not mitigated by imaginative and ingenious stage management. Mr. Vernon's stage management is very actor-like: that is to say, it is directed, not to secure the maximum of illusion for the play, but the maximum of fairness in distributing good places on the stage to the members of the cast. Had he been selfish enough, as some actor-managers are accused of being, to manage the stage so as to secure the maximum of prominence for himself, the effect would probably have justified him, since he plays Borkman. But his sense of equity is evidently stronger than his vanity; for he takes less than his share of conspicuity, repeatedly standing patiently with his back to the audience to be declaimed at down the stage by Miss Robins or Miss Ward, or whoever else he deems entitled to a turn. Alas! these conceptions of fairness, honorable as they are to Mr. Vernon's manhood, are far too simply quantitative for artistic purposes. The business of the stage manager of "John Gabriel Borkman" is chiefly to make the most of the title part; and if the actor of that part is too modest to do that for himself, some one else should stage-manage. Mr. Vernon perhaps

pleased the company, because he certainly did contrive that every one of them should have the centre of the stage to himself or herself whenever they had a chance of self-assertion; but as this act of green-room justice was placed before the naturalness of the representation, the actors did not gain by it, whilst the play suffered greatly.

Mr. Vernon, I suspect, was also hampered by a rather old-fashioned technical conception of the play as a tragedy. Now the traditional stage management of tragedy ignores realism — even the moderate degree of realism traditional in comedy. It lends itself to people talking at each other rhetorically from opposite sides of the stage, taking long sweeping walks up to their "points," striking attitudes in the focus of the public vision with an artificiality which, instead of being concealed, is not only disclosed but insisted on, and being affected in all their joints by emotions which a fine comedian conveys by the faintest possible inflection of tone or eyebrow. "John Gabriel Borkman" is no doubt technically a tragedy because it ends with the death of the leading personage in it. But to stage-manage or act it rhetorically as such is like drawing a Dance of Death in the style of Caracci or Giulio Romano. Clearly the required style is the homely-imaginative, the realistic-fateful — in a word, the Gothic. I am aware that to demand Gothic art from stage managers dominated by the notion that their business is to adapt the exigencies of stage-etiquette to the tragic and comic categories of our pseudo-classical dramatic tradition is to give them an order which they can but dimly understand and cannot execute at all; but Mr. Vernon is no mere routineer: he is a man of ideas. After all, Sir Henry Irving (in his "Bells" style), M. Lugné-Poë,

Mr. Richard Mansfield, and Mr. Charles Charrington have hit this mark (whilst missing the pseudo-classic one) nearly enough to show that it is by no means unattainable. Failing the services of these geniuses, I beg the conventional stage manager to treat Ibsen as comedy. That will not get the business right; but it will be better than the tragedy plan.

As to the acting of the play, it was fairly good, as acting goes in London now, whenever the performers were at all in their depth; and it was at least lugubriously well intentioned when they were out of it. Unfortunately they were very often out of it. If they had been anti-Ibsenites they would have marked their resentment of and impatience with the passages they did not understand by an irritable listlessness, designed to make the worst of the play as far as that could be done without making the worst of themselves. But the Ibsenite actor marks the speeches which are beyond him by a sudden access of pathetic sentimentality and an intense consciousness of Ibsen's greatness. No doubt this devotional plan lets the earnestness of the representation down less than the sceptical one; yet its effect is as false as false can be; and I am sorry to say that it is gradually establishing a funereally unreal tradition which is likely to end in making Ibsen the most portentous of stage bores. Take, for example, Ella Rentheim. Here you have a part which up to a certain point almost plays itself — a sympathetic old maid with a broken heart. Nineteen-twentieths of her might be transferred to the stage of the Princess's tomorrow and be welcomed there tearfully by the audiences which delight in "Two Little Vagabonds" and "East Lynne." Her desire to adopt Erhart is plain-sailing sentimentalism: her reproach to Borkman for

the crime of killing the "love life" in her and himself for the sake of his ambition is, as a *coup de théâtre*, quite within the range of playwrights who rank considerably below Mr. Pinero. All this is presented intelligently by Miss Robins — at moments even touchingly and beautifully. But the moment the dialogue crosses the line which separates the Ibsen sphere from the ordinary sphere her utterance rings false at once. Here is an example — the most striking in the play:

ELLA [*In strong inward emotion*]. Pity! Ha ha! I have never known pity since you deserted me. I was incapable of feeling it. If a poor starved child came into my kitchen, shivering and crying, and begging a morsel of food, I let the servants look to it. I never felt any desire to take the child to myself, to warm it at my own hearth, to have the pleasure of seeing it eat and be satisfied. And yet I was n't like that when I was young: *that* I remember clearly. It is you that have created an empty, barren desert within me — and without me too!

What is there in this speech that might not occur in any popular novel or drama of sentiment written since Queen Anne's death? If Miss Millward were to introduce it into "Black Eyed Susan," the Adelphi pit would accept it with moist eyes and without the faintest suspicion of Ibsen. But Ella Rentheim does not stop there. "You have cheated me of a mother's joy and happiness in life," she continues, "and of a mother's sorrows and tears as well. And perhaps that is the heaviest part of the loss to me. It may be that a mother's sorrows and tears were what I needed most." Now here the Adelphi pit would be puzzled; for here Ibsen speaks as the Great Man — one whose moral consciousness far transcends the common huckstering conception of life as a trade

in happiness in which sorrows and tears represent the bad bargains and joys and happiness the good ones. And here Miss Robins suddenly betrays that she is an Ibsenite without being an Ibsenist. The genuine and touching tone of self-pity suddenly turns into a perceptibly artificial snivel (forgive the rudeness of the word); and the sentence which is the most moving in the play provided it comes out simply and truthfully, is declaimed as a sentimental paradox which has no sort of reality or conviction for the actress. In this failure Miss Robins was entirely consistent with her own successes. As the woman in revolt against the intolerable slavery and injustice of ideal "womanliness" (Karin and Martha in "Pillars of Society") or against the man treating her merely as his sexual prey (Mariana in the recital of her mother's fate) her success has had no bounds except those set by the commercial disadvantages at which the performances were undertaken. As the impetuous, imaginative New Woman in her first youth, free, unscrupulous through ignorance, demanding of life that it shall be "thrilling," and terribly dangerous to impressionable Master Builders who have put on life's chains without learning its lessons, she has succeeded heart and soul, rather by being the character than by understanding it. In representing poignant nervous phenomena in their purely physical aspect, as in "Alan's Wife" and "Mrs. Lessingham," she has set up the infection of agony in the theatre with lacerating intensity by the vividness of her reproduction of its symptoms. But in sympathetic parts properly so called, where wisdom of heart, and sense of identity and common cause with others — in short, the parts we shall probably call religious as soon as we begin to gain some glimmering of what religion means — Miss

Robins is only sympathetic as a flute is sympathetic: that is, she has a pretty tone, and can be played on with an affectation of sentiment; but there is no reality, no sincerity in it. And so Ella Rentheim, so far as she is sympathetic, eludes her. The fact is, Miss Robins is too young and too ferociously individualistic to play her. Ella's grievances came out well enough, also her romance, and some of those kindly amenities of hers — notably her amiable farewell to Erhart; but of the woman who understands that she has been robbed of her due of tears and sorrow, of the woman who sees that the crazy expedition through the snow with Borkman is as well worth trying as a hopeless return to the fireside, there is no trace, nothing but a few indications that Miss Robins would have very little patience with such wisdom if she met it in real life.

Mr. Vernon's Borkman was not ill acted; only, as it was not Ibsen's Borkman, but the very reverse and negation of him, the better Mr. Vernon acted the worse it was for the play. He was a thoroughly disillusioned elderly man of business, patient and sensible rather than kindly, and with the sort of strength that a man derives from the experience that teaches him his limits. I think Mr. Vernon must have studied him in the north of Ireland, where that type reaches perfection. Ibsen's Borkman, on the contrary, is a man of the most energetic imagination, whose illusions feed on his misfortunes, and whose conception of his own power grows hyperbolical and Napoleonic in his solitude and impotence. Mr. Vernon's excursion into the snow was the aberration of a respectable banker in whose brain a vessel had suddenly burst: the true Borkman meets the fate of a vehement dreamer who has for thirteen years been deprived of that daily contact with reality

and responsibility without which genius inevitably produces unearthliness and insanity. Mr. Vernon was as earthly and sane as a man need be until he went for his walk in the snow, and a Borkman who is that is necessarily a trifle dull. Even Mr. Welch, though his scene in the second act was a triumph, made a fundamental mistake in the third, where Foldal, who has just been knocked down and nearly run over by the sleigh in which his daughter is being practically abducted by Erhart and Mrs. Wilton, goes into ecstasies of delight at what he supposes to be her good fortune in riding off in a silver-mounted carriage to finish her musical education under distinguished auspices. The whole point of this scene, at once penetratingly tragic and irresistibly laughable, lies in the sincerity of Foldal's glee and Borkman's sardonic chuckling over it. But Mr. Welch unexpectedly sacrificed the scene to a stage effect which has been done to death by Mr. Harry Nicholls and even Mr. Arthur Roberts. He played the heartbroken old man pretending to laugh — a descendant of the clown who jokes in the arena whilst his child is dying at home — and so wrecked what would otherwise have been the best piece of character work of the afternoon. Mr. Martin Harvey, as Erhart, was clever enough to seize the main idea of the part — the impulse towards happiness — but not experienced enough to know that the actor's business is not to supply an idea with a sounding board, but with a credible, simple and natural human being to utter it when its time comes and not before. He showed, as we all knew he would show, considerable stage talent and more than ordinary dramatic intelligence; but in the first act he was not the embarrassed young gentleman of Ibsen, but rather the " soaring human boy " imagined by Mr. Chadband;

and later on this attitude of his very nearly produced a serious jar at a critical point in the representation.

Miss Genevieve Ward played Gunhild. The character is a very difficult one, since the violently stagey manifestations of maternal feeling prescribed for the actress by Ibsen indicate a tragic strenuousness of passion which is not suggested by the rest of the dialogue. Miss Ward did not quite convince me that she had found the temperament appropriate to both. The truth is, her tragic style, derived from Ristori, was not made for Ibsen. On the other hand, her conversational style, admirably natural and quite free from the Mesopotamian solemnity with which some of her colleagues delivered the words of the Master, was genuinely dramatic, and reminded me of her excellent performance, years ago with Mr. Vernon, as Lona Hessel. Mrs. Tree was clever and altogether successful as Mrs. Wilton; and Miss Dora Barton's Frida was perfect. But then these two parts are comparatively easy. Miss Caldwell tried hard to modify her well-known representation of a farcical slavey into a passable Ibsenite parlormaid, and succeeded fairly except in the little scene which begins the third act.

On the whole, a rather disappointing performance of a play which cannot be read without forming expectations which are perhaps unreasonable, but are certainly inevitable.

A DOLL'S HOUSE AGAIN

A Doll's House. By Henrik Ibsen. Globe Theatre, 10 May, 1897.
Hamlet. Olympic Theatre, 10 May, 1897.
Chand d'Habits: a musical play without words. By Catulle Mendès and Jules Bouval. Her Majesty's Theatre, 8 May, 1897.

AT last I am beginning to understand anti-Ibsenism. It must be that I am growing old and weak and sentimental and foolish; for I cannot stand up to reality as I did once. Eight years ago, when Mr. Charrington, with "A Doll's House," struck the decisive blow for Ibsen — perhaps the only one that has really got home in England as yet — I rejoiced in it, and watched the ruin and havoc it made among the idols and temples of the idealists as a young war correspondent watches the bombardment of the unhealthy quarters of a city. But now I understand better what it means to the unhappy wretches who can conceive no other life as possible to them except the Doll's House life. The master of the Doll's House may endure and even admire himself as long as he is called King Arthur and prodigiously flattered; but to paint a Torvald Helmer for him, and leave his conscience and his ever-gnawing secret diffidence to whisper "Thou art the man" when he has perhaps outlived all chance of being any other sort of man, must be bitter and dreadful to him. Dr. Rank, too, with his rickets and his scrofula, no longer an example, like Herod, of the wrath of God, or a curiosity to be stared at as villagers stare at a sheep with two heads, but a matter-of-fact completion

of the typical picture of family life by one of the inevitable congenital invalids, or drunkards, or lunatics whose teeth are set on edge because their fathers have eaten sour grapes: this also is a horror against which an agony of protest may well be excused.

It will be remarked that I no longer dwell on the awakening of the woman, which was once the central point of the controversy as it is the central point of the drama. Why should I? The play solves that problem just as it is being solved in real life. The woman's eyes are opened; and instantly her doll's dress is thrown off and her husband left staring at her, helpless, bound thenceforth either to do without her (an alternative which makes short work of his fancied independence) or else treat her as a human being like himself, fully recognizing that he is not a creature of one superior species, Man, living with a creature of another and inferior species, Woman, but that Mankind is male and female, like other kinds, and that the inequality of the sexes is literally a cock and bull story, certain to end in such an unbearable humiliation as that which our suburban King Arthurs suffer at the hands of Ibsen. The ending of the play is not on the face of it particularly tragic: the alleged "note of interrogation" is a sentimental fancy; for it is clear that Helmer is brought to his senses, and that Nora's departure is no claptrap "Farewell for ever," but a journey in search of self-respect and apprenticeship to life. Yet there is an underlying solemnity caused by a fact that the popular instinct has divined: to wit, that Nora's revolt is the end of a chapter of human history. The slam of the door behind her is more momentous than the cannon of Waterloo or Sedan, because when she comes back, it will not be to the old home; for when the patriarch

no longer rules, and the "breadwinner" acknowledges his dependence, there is an end of the old order; and an institution upon which so much human affection and suffering have been lavished, and about which so much experience of the holiest right and bitterest wrong has gathered, cannot fall without moving even its destroyers, much more those who believe that its extirpation is a mortal wound to society. This moment of awe and remorse in "A Doll's House" was at first lightened by the mere Women's Rights question. Now that this no longer distracts us, we feel the full weight of the unsolved destiny of our Helmers, our Krogstads, our Ranks and our Rank ancestors, whom we cannot, like the Heavenly Twin, dispose of by breaking their noses and saying, "Take that, you father of a speckled toad."

It may be, however, that this difference between the impression made by the famous performance in 1889 and the present revival is due partly to artistic conditions. On Monday last Mr. Courtenay Thorpe accomplished the remarkable feat of playing Helmer in the afternoon and the Ghost in "Hamlet" in the evening, and doing both better than we have seen them done before. Mr. Waring, our original Helmer, realized the importance of this most unflattering part, and sacrificed himself to play it. But he could not bring himself to confess to it wholly. He played it critically, and realized it by a process of intentional self-stultification. The resultant performance, excellently convincing up to fully nineteen-twentieths, was, as regards the remaining twentieth, obviously a piece of acting in which a line was drawn, as a matter of self-respect, between Mr. Waring and Mr. Helmer. Nevertheless, it was badly missed when Mr. Charrington tried the part later on and

achieved a record as the very worst Helmer in the world through sheer incompatibility of temperament. But Mr. Courtenay Thorpe obliterates both records. He plays Helmer with passion. It is the first time we have seen this done; and the effect is overwhelming. We no longer study an object lesson in lord-of-creationism, appealing to our sociological interest only. We see a fellow-creature blindly wrecking his happiness and losing his "love life," and are touched dramatically. There were slips and blunders, it is true. Mr. Courtenay Thorpe did not know his dialogue thoroughly; and when the words did not come unsought he said anything that came into his head (stark nonsense sometimes) sooner than go out of his part to look for them. And he succumbed to the temptation to utter the two or three most fatuously conceited of Helmer's utterances as "points," thereby destroying the naturalness that could alone make them really credible and effective. But it did not matter: the success was beyond being undone by trifles. Ibsen has in this case repeated his old feat of making an actor's reputation.

Miss Achurch's Nora is an old story by this time; and I leave its celebration to the young critics who saw it on Monday for the first time. It still seems to me to place her far ahead of any living English actress of her generation in this class of work — the only class, let me add, which now presents any difficulty to actresses who bring some personal charm to the aid of quite commonplace attainments. Here and there we have had some bits of new-fashioned work on the stage — for instance, Mrs. Kendal's extraordinarily fine and finished performance in "The Greatest of These," and Miss Winifred Emery's last serious feat of acting in "The Benefit of the Doubt." These show that Miss Achurch's

monopoly is not one of executive skill, but of the modernity of culture, the mental power and quickness of vision to recognize the enormous value of the opportunity she has seized. In the eight years since 1889 she has gained in strength and art; and her performance is more powerful, more surely gripped, and more expertly carried out than it used to be; but it has losses to show as well as gains. In the old days Nora's first scene with Krogstad had a wonderful naïveté: her youthfully unsympathetic contempt for him, her certainty that his effort to make a serious business of the forgery was mere vulgarity, her utter repudiation of the notion that there could be any comparison between his case and hers, were expressed to perfection. And in the first half of the renowned final scene the chill "clearness and certainty" of the disillusion, the quite new tone of intellectual seriousness, announcing by its freshness and coolness a complete change in her as she calls her husband to account with her eyes wide open for the first time: all this, so vitally necessary to the novel truth of the scene and the convincing effect of the statement that she no longer loves him, came with lifegiving naturalness. But these two scenes have now become unmistakably stale to Miss Achurch. In the Krogstad one she plays as if the danger of penal servitude were the whole point of it; and she agonizes over the cool opening of the explanation with Helmer with all the conventional pangs of parting in full play from the first. This ages her Nora perceptibly. Physically she is youthful enough: Helmer's "squirrel" still dances blithely, sings unmercifully, and wears reckless garments at which the modish occupants of the stalls stare in scandal and consternation (and which, by the way, are impossible for a snobbish bank manager's

wife). But Miss Achurch can no longer content herself with a girl's allowance of passion and sympathy. She fills the cup and drains it; and consequently, though Nora has all her old vitality and originality, and more than her old hold of the audience, she is less girlish and more sophisticated with the passions of the stage than she was at the Novelty when she first captivated us.

Mr. Charrington's Rank, always an admirable performance, is now better than ever. But it is also sterner and harder to bear. He has very perceptibly increased the horror of the part by a few touches which bring and keep his despair and doom more vividly before the audience; and he no longer softens his final exit by the sentimental business of snatching Nora's handkerchief.

The effect of a performance of the "Doll's House" with the three most important parts very well played, and the economy of the mounting — which involves a disembowelled sofa — got over by intelligent stage management and a little judicious hiring and borrowing, is almost painfully strong. It is mitigated by the earnest but mistaken efforts of Mr. Charles Fulton and Miss Vane Featherstone as Krogstad and Mrs. Linden. Mr. Fulton, invaluable at the Adelphi, struggles with his part like a blacksmith mending a watch; and the style of play which makes Miss Vane Featherstone so useful and attractive in the unrealistic drama produces, in a realistic part, exactly the effect that might have been expected. The flattering notion, still current in the profession, that anybody can play Ibsen, is hardly bearing the test of experience. Happily, the elements of strength in the performance triumph over all drawbacks. If "The Wild Duck" next week is as good as "A Doll's House," the Independent Theatre (for which,

as a small shareholder, I have a certain partiality) will have done very well.

I found "Hamlet" at the Olympic not a bad anodyne after the anguish of the Helmer household. Throwing off the critic, I indulged a silly boyish affection of mine for the play, which I know nearly by heart, thereby having a distinct advantage over Mr. Nutcombe Gould, whose acquaintance with the text is extremely precarious. His aptitude for transposing the adverb "so" in such a way as to spoil the verse, not to mention putting in full stops where there is no stop, and no stop where there is a full stop, is calamitous and appalling. For example:

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come [*full stop*].
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil [*full stop*].
Must give us pause."

And

"When the grass grows the proverb is somewhat musty."

The effect of changing "'t is" into "it is" was also fully exploited. Thus —

"Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer."

Even Mr. Foss, otherwise better than most Laerteses, said,

"O Heaven, is it possible a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?"

Mr. Nutcombe Gould gave us all Hamlet's appearance, something of his feeling, and but little of his brains. He died in the full possession of his faculties, and had

but just announced with unimpaired vigor that the rest was silence when an elderly gentleman rose in the middle of the front row of the stalls, and addressed the house vehemently on burning political questions of the day. Miss Lily Hanbury went through the familiar ceremony of playing Ophelia with success, thanks to a delicate ear for the music and a goodly person. Mr. Ben Greet was an exasperatingly placid Polonius, and Mr. Kendrick an unwontedly spirited Horatio. The only really noteworthy feature of the performance was, as aforesaid, the Ghost. Mr. Courtenay Thorpe's articulation deserted him towards the end; so that the last half-dozen lines of his long narrative and the whole of his part in the closet scene were a mere wail, in which no man could distinguish any words; but the effect was past spoiling by that time; and a very remarkable effect it was, well imagined and well executed.

What possessed Mr. Beerbohm Tree to offer "'Chand d'Habits" to the sort of audience that runs after stage versions of recent imitations of the "historical" novels of James Grant and Harrison Ainsworth? These plays without words only exist for people who are highly sensitive to music, color, and the complex art of physical expression. To offer them to barbarians with no senses at all, capable of nothing but sensational stories shouted at them in plain words, with plenty of guns and swords and silks and velvets, is to court ridicule, especially at half-past ten at night, and with the overture, which might have done something to attune the house, played as an entr'acte. For my part, I enjoyed "'Chand d'Habits" immensely, and thought the insensibility and impatience of the audience perfectly hoggish. But then I had not to sit out "Seats of the Mighty" beforehand.

IBSEN TRIUMPHANT

22 May, 1897.

CAN it possibly be true that "The Hobby Horse" was produced so recently as 1886? More amazing still, was this the comedy — comedy, mark you — which suggested to me just such hopes of Mr. Pinero's future as others built upon "The Profligate" and "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," both of which I contemned as relapses into drawing-room melodrama? Going back to it now after an interval of ten years, I find it, not a comedy, but a provincial farce in three acts, decrepit in stage convention, and only capable of appearing fresh to those who, like myself, can wrench themselves back, by force of memory, to the point of view of a period when revivals of "London Assurance" were still possible. What makes the puerilities of the play more exasperating nowadays is that it is clear, on a survey of the original production and the present revival, that Mr. Pinero was not driven into them by any serious deficiency in the executive talent at his disposal. In Mrs. Kendal and Mr. Hare he had two comedians for whose combined services an unfortunate modern dramatic author might well sacrifice half his percentage. Yet the part of Spencer Jermyn is made so easy that one may well ask the people who rave about Mr. Hare's performance as a masterpiece of art what they suppose really difficult acting to be. And imagine Mrs. Kendal condemned to make London laugh by pretending to treat a grown-up stepson as a little boy, arranging his hair, telling him not to be afraid, that she will not punish him, and so forth! One gasps at these things

nowadays. They may be pardonable in the part of Shattock, who, as a comic relief — for even comedy in England must have comic relief — is not expected to do or say anything credible or possible; but here they were thrust into the part of the heroine, enacted by the most accomplished actress in London. What sort of barbarians were we in the days when we took this sort of thing as a matter of course, and made merry over it?

And yet I was right about "The Hobby Horse." It has character, humor, observation, genuine comedy and literary workmanship in it as unmistakably as "The Benefit of the Doubt" has them. What is the matter with the play is the distortion and debasement of all its qualities to suit the childishness and vulgarity of the theatre of ten years ago. It will be asked scornfully whether the theatre of to-day is any better — whether "The Red Robe," for instance, is half as good as "The Hobby Horse"? Before answering that, let me compare "The Hobby Horse" with "The Princess and the Butterfly"! Could Mr. Pinero venture nowadays to present to the St. James's audience, as comedy, the humors of Mr. Shattock and the scene between Lady Jermyn and her stepson? You may reply that the author who has given us the duel in "The Princess and the Butterfly" is capable of anything; but I would have you observe that the duel is a mere makeshift in the plot of "The Princess," whereas the follies of "The Hobby Horse" are presented as flowers of comedy, and — please attend to this — are actually very good of their kind. That such a kind should have been the best of its day — nay, that the play should have suffered in 1886 because its comedy was rather too subtle for the taste of that time — is a staggering thing to think of. But I am

prepared to go further as to our improvement by embracing even the comparison with "The Red Robe" in support of my case. The nineteenth-century novel, with all its faults, has maintained itself immeasurably above the nineteenth-century drama. Take the women novelists alone, from Charlotte Brontë to Sarah Grand, and think of them, if you can, in any sort of relation except that of a superior species to the dramatists of their day. I unhesitatingly say that no novelist could, even if there were any reason for it, approach the writing of a novel with his mind warped, his hand shackled, and his imagination stultified by the conditions which Mr. Pinero accepted, and even gloried in accepting, when he wrote "The Hobby Horse." The state of public taste which turns from the first-rate comedies of the 'eighties to dramatizations of the third-rate novels of the 'nineties is emphatically a progressive state. These cloak-and-sword dramas, at their worst — if we have reached their worst, which is perhaps too much to hope — are only bad stories badly told: if they were good stories well told, there would be no more objection to them on my part than there is at present on that of the simple people for whom they are not too bad. But the sort of play they are supplanting, whether good or bad, was a wrong sort: the more craftily it was done the more hopelessly wrong it was. The dramatists who had mastered it despised the novelists, and said, "You may sneer at our craft, but let us see you do it yourselves." Just the sort of retort a cardsharper might make on a cardinal.

I need hardly go on to explain that Ibsen is at the back of this sudden explosion of disgusted intolerance on my part for a style of entertainment which I suffered gladly enough in the days of the Hare-Kendal

management. On Monday last I sat without a murmur in a stuffy theatre on a summer afternoon from three to nearly half-past six, spellbound by Ibsen; but the price I paid for it was to find myself stricken with mortal impatience and boredom the next time I attempted to sit out the pre-Ibsenite drama for five minutes. Where shall I find an epithet magnificent enough for "The Wild Duck"! To sit there getting deeper and deeper into that Ekdal home, and getting deeper and deeper into your own life all the time, until you forget that you are in a theatre at all; to look on with horror and pity at a profound tragedy, shaking with laughter all the time at an irresistible comedy; to go out, not from a diversion, but from an experience deeper than real life ever brings to most men, or often brings to any man: that is what "The Wild Duck" was like last Monday at the Globe. It is idle to attempt to describe it; and as to giving an analysis of the play, I did that seven years ago, and decline now to give myself an antiquated air by treating as a novelty a masterpiece that all Europe delights in. Besides, the play is as simple as "Little Red Ridinghood" to any one who comes to it fresh from life instead of stale from the theatre.

And now, what have our "passing-craze" theorists to say to the latest nine-days' wonder, the tremendous effect this ultra-Ibsen play has just produced eight years after the craze set in? As for me, what I have to say is simply, "I told you so."

We have by this time seen several productions of "A Doll's House," three of "Rosmersholm," and two of "The Wild Duck." The first performance of "A Doll's House" (Mr. Charrington's at the Novelty) and of "Rosmersholm" (Miss Florence Farr's at the Vaude-

ville) gave the actors such an overwhelming advantage as the first revealers to London of a much greater dramatist than Shakespeare, that even the vehemently anti-Ibsenite critics lost all power of discrimination, and flattered the performers as frantically as they abused the plays. But since then the performers have had to struggle against the unreasonable expectations thus created; and the effect of the plays has been sternly proportionate to the intelligence and skill brought to bear on them. We have learnt that an Ibsen performance in the hands of M. Lugné Poë or Mr. Charrington is a perfectly different thing from one in which there is individual talent but practically no stage management. M. Lugné Poë established his reputation at once and easily, because he was under no suspicion of depending on the genius of a particular actress: his "Rosmersholm" with Marthe Mellot as Rebecca had the magic atmosphere which is the sign of the true manager as unmistakably as his "Master Builder" with Suzanne Auclaire as Hilda. But Mr. Charrington, like Mr. Kendal and Mr. Bancroft, has a wife; and the difference made by Miss Janet Achurch's acting has always been much more obvious than that made by her husband's management to a public which has lost all tradition of what stage management really is, apart from lavish expenditure on scenery and furniture. But for that his production of Voss's "Alexandria" would have established his reputation as the best stage manager of true modern drama in London — indeed the only one, in the sense in which I am now using the words: the sense, that is, of a producer of poetically realistic illusion. Now, however, we have him at last with Miss Janet Achurch out of the bill. The result is conclusive. The same insight which enables Mr. Charrington, in

acting Relling, to point the moral of the play in half a dozen strokes, has also enabled him to order the whole representation in such a fashion that there is not a moment of bewilderment during the development of a dramatic action subtle enough in its motives to have left even highly trained and attentive readers of the play quite addled as to what it is all about. The dialogue, which in any other hands would have been cut to ribbons, is given without the slightest regard to the clock; and not even the striking of six produces the stampede that would set in after a quarter-past five if the play were a " popular " one. That is a real triumph of management. It may be said that it is a triumph of Ibsen's genius; but of what use is Ibsen's genius if the manager has not the genius to believe in it?

The acting, for a scratch company, was uncommonly good: there was mettle in it, as there usually is where there is good leadership. Mr. Lawrence Irving, who played Relling to Mr. Abingdon's Hjalmar Ekdal at the first production of the play by Mr. Grein, handed over Relling to Mr. Charrington, and played Hjalmar himself. In all dramatic literature, as far as I know it, there is no other such part for a comedian; and I do not believe any actor capable of repeating the lines intelligibly could possibly fail in it. To say therefore that Mr. Irving did not fail is to give him no praise at all: to say that he quite succeeded would be to proclaim him the greatest comedian in London. He was very amusing, and played with cleverness and sometimes with considerable finesse. But though he did not overact any particular passage, he overdid the part a little as a whole by making Hjalmar grotesque. His appearance proclaimed his weakness at once: the conceited ass was recognizable at a glance. This was not

right. Hjalmar should impose on us at first. The fact is, we all have to look much nearer home for the originals of Ibsen's characters than we imagine; and Hjalmar Ekdals are so common nowadays that it is not they, but the other people, who look singular. Still, Mr. Irving's performance was a remarkable achievement, and fairly entitles him to patronize his father as an old-fashioned actor who has positively never played a leading Ibsen part. Mr. Courtenay Thorpe, as Gregers Werle, confirmed the success he made in "A Doll's House" as an Ibsen actor — that is, an actor of the highest class in modern drama; but considering the length of the play, he was too free in his use of repetitions and nervous stumblings to give an air of naturalness and spontaneity to his dialogue. Miss Kate Phillips, who made her Ibsen début as Gina, was quite as natural; and yet she never wasted an instant, and was clear, crisp and punctual as clockwork without being in the least mechanical. I am on the side of smart execution: if there are two ways of being natural in speech on the stage, I suggest that Miss Phillips's way is better than the fluffy way. As to her impersonation of Gina, Nature prevented her from making it quite complete. Gina is as unique in drama as Hjalmar. All Shakespeare's matrons rolled into one, from Volumnia to Mrs. Quickly, would be as superficial and conventional in comparison with Gina as a classic sybil by Raphael with a Dutch cook by Rembrandt. That waddling housewife, with her practical sense and sympathy, and her sanely shameless insensibility to the claims of the ideal, or to any imaginative presentment of a case whatever, could only be done by Gina herself; and Gina certainly could not act. If Miss Phillips were to waddle, or counterfeit insensitiveness, or divest

her speech of artistic character, the result would only be such a caricature as a child gives of its grandmother, or, worse still, something stage-Shakespearean, like her Audrey. She wisely made no attempt to denaturalize herself, but played the part sincerely and with the technical skill that marks her off, as it marks Mrs. Kendal and her school off, from our later generation of agreeable amateurs who do not know the A B C of their business. Once, in the second act, she from mere habit and professional sympathy played with her face to a speech of Hjalmar's which Gina would have taken quite stolidly; but this was her only mistake. She got no laughs of the wrong sort in the wrong place; and the speech in which the worrited Gina bursts out with the quintessence of the whole comedy — "That 's what comes when crazy people go about making the claims of the what-d'yer-call-it" — went home right up to the hilt into our midriffs. Mr. Welch's Ekdal left nothing to be said: it was faultless. Mr. Charlington played Relling with great artistic distinction: nobody else got so completely free from conventional art or so convincingly behind the part and the play as he. The only failure of the cast was Molvik, who was well made up, but did not get beyond a crude pantomimic representation of sickness and drunkenness which nearly ruined the play at the most critically pathetic moment in the final act. Mr. Outram was uninteresting as Werle: the part does not suit his age and style. Miss Ffolliott Paget was a capital Mrs. Sörby.

Miss Winifred Fraser not only repeated her old triumph as Hedwig, but greatly added to it. The theatre could hardly have a more delicate talent at its service; and yet it seems to have no use for it. But Miss Fraser need not be discouraged. The British public is

slow; but it is sure. By the time she is sixty it will discover that she is one of its best actresses; and then it will expect her to play Juliet until she dies of old age.

And this reminds me that I wandered away from "The Hobby Horse" without a word as to the acting of it. Mrs. Kendal, always great in comedy, had an enchanting way of making Mrs. Jermyn's silliness credible and attractive. Miss May Harvey is far too clever and too well acquainted with Mrs. Kendal's methods to be at any great loss in replacing her; but she is no more specifically a comedian than Jane Hading is; and her decisive opportunity as an actress will evidently come in much more intense work. In technical skill she is far above the average of her generation — a generation, alas! of duffers — and I have no doubt that she will play a distinguished part in the theatrical history of the 'nineties and 'twenties. The lady who plays Miss Moxon cannot touch Mrs. Beerbohm Tree's inimitable performance in that inglorious but amusing and lifelike part. On the other hand, Mr. Fred Kerr has made the solicitor his own for ever. His acting is irresistibly funny, not because it is unscrupulously bad, as funny acting often is, but because it is perfectly in character and as good of its kind as can be. An actor of Mr. Kerr's talent should not be allowed to waste himself on Miss Brown's and Jedbury Juniors and such stuff. Mr. Gilbert Hare has improved greatly, and is now as welcome for his own sake as he formerly was for his father's. Mr. Groves of course does what can be done with the impossible but laughable Shattock; and the "pushin' little cad" whom he denounces, though *persona muta* and unnamed in the bill, is richly endowed by Nature for his humble part.

MAINLY ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

Othello. Lyric Theatre, 22 May, 1897.
Antony and Cleopatra. Olympic Theatre, 24 May, 1897.

IF only I were a moralist, like Shakespeare, how I could improve the occasion of the fall of the once Independent Theatre! A fortnight ago that body, whose glory was its freedom from actor-managership and its repertory of plays which no commercial theatre would produce, was hanging the wreath on the tip-top of the Independent tower over its performance of "The Wild Duck." This week it has offered us, as choice Independent fare, the thirty-year-old "acting version" of Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra," with which Miss Janet Achurch made a sensation the other day in Manchester. I ask the directors of the Independent Theatre what they mean by this? I ask it as a shareholder who put down his hard-earned money for the express purpose of providing a refuge from such exhibitions. I ask it as a member of the body politic, whose only hope of dramatic nutrition is in the strict specialization of these newly and painfully evolved little organs, the Independent and New Century Theatres. I ask it as a critic who has pledged himself for the integrity of the Independent Theatre as recklessly as Falstaff did for Pistol's honesty. Even Pistol was able to retort on Falstaff, "Didst thou not share? Hadst thou not fifteen pence?" But I have not had fifteen pence: I have only had an afternoon of lacerating anguish, spent partly in contemplating Miss Achurch's overpowering experiments in rhetoric, and partly in wishing I had never been born.

If I speak intemperately on this matter, please to remember what I have endured throughout a quarter of a century of playgoing. Years ago — how many does not matter — I went to the theatre one evening to see a play called "The Two Roses," and was much struck therein by the acting of one Henry Irving, who created a modern realistic character named Digby Grand in a manner which, if applied to an Ibsen play now, would astonish us as much as Miss Achurch's Nora astonished us. When next I saw that remarkable actor, he had gone into a much older established branch of his business, and was trying his hand at "Richelieu." He was new to the work; and I suffered horribly; the audience suffered horribly; and I hope (though I am a humane man, considering my profession) that the actor suffered horribly. For I knew what rhetoric ought to be, having tasted it in literature, music and painting; and as to the stage, I had seen great Italians do it in the days when Duse, like Ibsen, had not arrived. After a long period of convalescence, I ventured again to the Lyceum, and saw "Hamlet." There was a change. Richelieu had been incessantly excruciating: Hamlet had only moments of violent ineptitude separated by lengths of dulness; and though I yawned, I felt none the worse next morning. When some unaccountable impulse led me to the Lyceum again (I suspect it was to see Miss Ellen Terry), "The Lady of Lyons" was in the bill. Before Claude Melnotte had moved his wrist and chin twice, I saw that he had mastered the rhetorical style at last. His virtuosity of execution soon became extraordinary. His "Charles I," for instance, became a miracle of the most elaborate class of this sort of acting. It was a hard-earned and well-deserved triumph; and by it his destiny was ac-

complished; the anti-Irvingites were confuted; the caricaturists were disconcerted; and the foreign actor could no longer gasp at us when we talked of Irving as a master of his art. But suppose he had foregone this victory! Suppose he had said, "I can produce studies of modern life and character like Digby Grand. I can create weird supernatural figures like Vanderdecken (Vanderdecken, now forgotten, was a masterpiece), and all sorts of grotesques. But if I try this rhetorical art of making old-fashioned heroics impressive and even beautiful, I shall not only make a fool of myself as a beginner where I have hitherto shone as an adept, but — what is of deeper import to me and the world — I shall give up a fundamentally serious social function for a fundamentally nonsensical theatrical accomplishment." What would have been the result of such a renunciation? We should have escaped Lyceum Shakespeare; and we should have had the ablest manager of the day driven by life-or-death necessity to extract from contemporary literature the proper food for the modern side of his talent, and thus to create a new drama instead of galvanizing an old one and cutting himself off from all contact with the dramatic vitality of his time. And what an excellent thing that would have been both for us and for him!

Now what Sir Henry Irving has done, for good or evil, Miss Janet Achurch can do too. If she is tired of being "an Ibsenite actress" and wants to be a modern Ristori, it is clear that the public will submit to her apprenticeship as humbly as they submitted to Sir Henry Irving's. Mr. Grossmith may caricature her at his recitals; flippant critics may pass jests through the stalls or pittites with an ungovernable sense

of the ludicrous burst into guffaws; the orchestra may writhe like a heap of trodden worms at each uplifting of her favorite tragic wail; but now, as at the Lyceum of old, the public as a whole is clearly at her mercy; for in art the strength of a chain is its strongest link; and once the power to strike a masterstroke is clearly felt, the public will wait for it patiently through all extremities of experimental blundering. But the result will repeat itself as surely as the process. Let Miss Achurch once learn to make the rhetorical drama plausible, and thenceforth she will never do anything else. Her interest in life and character will be supplanted by an interest in plastique and execution; and she will come to regard emotion simply as the best of lubricants and stimulants, caring nothing for its specific character so long as it is of a sufficiently obvious and facile sort to ensure a copious flow without the fatigue of thought. She will take to the one-part plays of Shakespeare, Schiller, Giacometti, and Sardou, and be regarded as a classic person by the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon. In short, she will become an English Sarah Bernhardt. The process is already far advanced. On Monday last she was sweeping about, clothed with red Rossettian hair and beauty to match; revelling in the power of her voice and the steam pressure of her energy; curving her wrists elegantly above Antony's head as if she were going to extract a globe of gold fish and two rabbits from behind his ear; and generally celebrating her choice between the rare and costly art of being beautifully natural in lifelike human acting, like Duse, and the comparatively common and cheap one of being theatrically beautiful in heroic stage exhibition. Alas for our lost leaders! Shakespeare and success capture them all.

"Othello" at the Lyric was a much less trying experience. "Antony and Cleopatra" is an attempt at a serious drama. To say that there is plenty of bogus characterization in it — Enobarbus, for instance — is merely to say that it is by Shakespeare. But the contrast between Cæsar and Antony is true human drama; and Cæsar himself is deeper than the usual Shakespearean stage king. "Othello," on the other hand, is pure melodrama. There is not a touch of character in it that goes below the skin; and the fitful attempts to make Iago something better than a melodramatic villain only make a hopeless mess of him and his motives. To any one capable of reading the play with an open mind as to its merits, it is obvious that Shakespeare plunged through it so impetuously that he had it finished before he had made up his mind as to the character and motives of a single person in it. Probably it was not until he stumbled into the sentimental fit in which he introduced the willow song that he saw his way through without making Desdemona enough of the "supersubtle Venetian" of Iago's description to strengthen the case for Othello's jealousy. That jealousy, by the way, is purely melodramatic jealousy. The real article is to be found later on in "A Winter's Tale," where Leontes is an unmistakable study of a jealous man from life. But when the worst has been said of "Othello" that can be provoked by its superficiality and stageyness, it remains magnificent by the volume of its passion and the splendor of its word-music, which sweep the scenes up to a plane on which sense is drowned in sound. The words do not convey ideas: they are streaming ensigns and tossing branches to make the tempest of passion visible. In this passage, for instance:

> "Like to the Pontic sea,
> Whose icy current and compulsive course
> Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
> To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
> E'en so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
> Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love
> Till that a capable and wide revenge
> Swallow them up,"

if Othello cannot turn his voice into a thunder and surge of passion, he will achieve nothing but a ludicrously misplaced bit of geography. If in the last scene he cannot throw the darkness of night and the shadow of death over such lines as

> "I know not where is that Promethean heat
> That can thy light relume,"

he at once becomes a person who, on his way to commit a pettish murder, stops to philosophize foolishly about a candle end. The actor cannot help himself by studying his part acutely; for there is nothing to study in it. Tested by the brain, it is ridiculous: tested by the ear, it is sublime. He must have the orchestral quality in him; and as that is a matter largely of physical endowment, it follows that only an actor of certain physical endowments can play Othello. Let him be as crafty as he likes without that, he can no more get the effect than he can sound the bottom C on a violoncello. The note is not there, that is all; and he had better be content to play Iago, which is within the compass of any clever actor of normal endowments.

When I have said that Mr. Wilson Barrett has not this special musical and vocal gift, I have said everything needful; for in this matter a miss is as good

as a mile. It is of no use to *speak* "Farewell the tranquil mind"; for the more intelligently and reasonably it is spoken the more absurd it is. It must affect us as "Ora per sempre addio, sante memorie" affects us when sung by Tamagno. Mr. Wilson Barrett is an unmusical speaker except when he is talking Manx. He chops and drives his phrases like a smart carpenter with a mallet and chisel, hitting all the prepositions and conjunctions an extra hard rap; and he has a positive genius for misquotation. For example:

"Of one that loved not wisely but well"

and

"Drop tears down faster than the Arabian trees,"

both of which appear to me to bear away the palm from Miss Achurch's

"By the scandering of this pelleted storm."

It is a pity that he is not built to fit Othello; for he produces the play, as usual, very well. At the Lyceum every one is bored to madness the moment Sir Henry Irving and Miss Terry leave the stage: at the Lyric, as aforetime at the Princess's, the play goes briskly from beginning to end; and there are always three or four successes in smaller parts sparkling round Mr. Barrett's big part. Thus Mr. Wigne Percyval, the first Cassio I ever saw get over the difficulty of appearing a responsible officer and a possible successor for Othello with nothing but a drunken scene to do it in, divides the honors of the second act with Iago; and Mr. Ambrose Manning is interesting and amusing all through as Roderigo. Mr. Franklin McLeay, as Iago, makes him the hero of the performance. But the char-

acter defies all consistency. Shakespeare, as usual, starts with a rough general notion of a certain type of individual, and then throws it over at the first temptation. Iago begins as a coarse blackguard, whose jovial bluntness passes as "honesty," and who is professionally a routine subaltern incapable of understanding why a mathematician gets promoted over his head. But the moment a stage effect can be made, or a fine speech brought off by making him refined, subtle and dignified, he is set talking like Hamlet, and becomes a godsend to students of the "problems" presented by our divine William's sham characters. Mr. McLeay does all that an actor can do with him. He follows Shakespeare faithfully on the rails and off them. He plays the jovial blackguard to Cassio and Roderigo and the philosopher and mentor to Othello just as the lines lead him, with perfect intelligibility and with so much point, distinction and fascination that the audience loads him with compliments, and the critics all make up their minds to declare that he shows the finest insight into the many-sided and complex character of the prince of villains. As to Miss Maud Jeffries, I came to the conclusion when she sat up in bed and said, "Why I should fear, I know not" with pretty petulance, that she did not realize the situation a bit; but her voice was so pathetically charming and musical, and she so beautiful a woman, that I hasten to confess that I never saw a Desdemona I liked better. Miss Frances Ivor, always at her best in Shakespeare, should not on that account try to deliver the speech about "lashing the rascal naked through the world" in the traditional Mrs. Crummles manner. Emilia's really interesting speeches, which contain some of Shakespeare's curious anticipations of modern ideas,

were of course cut; but Miss Ivor, in what was left, proved her aptitude for Shakespearean work, of which I self-denyingly wish her all possible abundance.

Mr. Barrett's best scene is that in which he reads the despatch brought by Lodovico. His worst — leaving out of account those torrential outbreaks of savagery for which he is too civilized — is the second act. The storm, the dread of shipwreck, the darkness, the fierce riot, the "dreadful bell that frights the isle from its propriety," are not only not suggested, but contradicted, by the scenery and management. We are shown a delightful Mediterranean evening; the bell is as pretty as an operatic angelus; Othello comes in like a temperance lecturer; Desdemona does not appear; and the exclamation,

> "Look, if my gentle love be not raised up —
> I 'll make thee an example,"

becomes a ludicrously schoolmasterly "I 'll make thee an example," twice repeated. Here Mr. Barrett makes the Moor priggish instead of simple, as Shakespeare meant him to be in the moments when he meant anything beyond making effective stage points. Another mistake in management is the business of the portrait in the third act, which is of little value to Othello, and interrupts Iago's speeches in a flagrantly obvious manner.

ROBERTSON REDIVIVUS

For the Honor of the Family: an anonymous adaptation of Emile Augier's "Marriage d'Olympe." Comedy Theatre, 10 June, 1897.
Caste. By T. W. Robertson. Revival. Court Theatre, 10 June, 1897.

THE revival of "Caste" at the Court Theatre is the revival of an epoch-making play after thirty years. A very little epoch and a very little play, certainly, but none the less interesting on that account to mortal critics whose own epochs, after full deductions for nonage and dotage, do not outlast more than two such plays. The Robertsonian movement caught me as a boy; the Ibsen movement caught me as a man; and the next one will catch me as a fossil.

It happens that I did not see Mr. Hare's revival of "Caste" at the Garrick, nor was I at his leave-taking at the Lyceum before his trip to America; so that until last week I had not seen "Caste" since the old times when the Hare-Kendal management was still in futurity, and the Bancrofts had not left Tottenham Court Road. During that interval a great many things have happened, some of which have changed our minds and morals more than many of the famous Revolutions and Reformations of the historians. For instance, there was supernatural religion then; and eminent physicists, biologists and their disciples were "infidels." There was a population question then; and what men and women knew about one another was either a family secret or the recollection of a harvest of wild oats. There was no social question — only a "social evil";

and the educated classes knew the working classes through novels written by men who had gathered their notions of the subject either from a squalid familiarity with general servants in Pentonville kitchens, or from no familiarity at all with the agricultural laborer and the retinues of the country house and West End mansion. To-day the "infidels" are bishops and churchwardens, without change of view on their part. There is no population question; and the young lions and lionesses of Chronicle and Star, Keynote and Pseudonym, without suspicion of debauchery, seem to know as much of erotic psychology as the most liberally educated Periclean Athenians. The real working classes loom hugely in middle-class consciousness, and have pressed into their service the whole public energy of the time; so that now even a Conservative Government has nothing for the classes but "doles," extracted with difficulty from its preoccupation with instalments of Utopian Socialism. The extreme reluctance of Englishmen to mention these changes is the measure of their dread of a reaction to the older order which they still instinctively connect with strict applications of religion and respectability.

Since "Caste" has managed to survive all this, it need not be altogether despised by the young champions who are staring contemptuously at it, and asking what heed they can be expected to give to the opinions of critics who think such stuff worth five minutes' serious consideration. For my part, though I enjoy it more than I enjoyed "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith," I do not defend it. I see now clearly enough that the eagerness with which it was swallowed long ago was the eagerness with which an ocean castaway, sucking his bootlaces in an agony of thirst in a sublime desert of salt

water, would pounce on a spoonful of flat salutaris and think it nectar. After years of sham heroics and superhuman balderdash, "Caste" delighted every one by its freshness, its nature, its humanity. You will shriek and snort, O scornful young men, at this monstrous assertion. "Nature! Freshness!" you will exclaim. "In Heaven's name (if you are not too modern to have heard of Heaven) where is there a touch of nature in 'Caste'?" I reply, "In the windows, in the doors, in the walls, in the carpet, in the ceiling, in the kettle, in the fireplace, in the ham, in the tea, in the bread and butter, in the bassinet, in the hats and sticks and clothes, in the familiar phrases, the quiet, unpumped, everyday utterance: in short, the commonplaces that are now spurned because they are commonplaces, and were then inexpressibly welcome because they were the most unexpected of novelties."

And yet I dare not submit even this excuse to a detailed examination. Charles Mathews was in the field long before Robertson and Mr. Bancroft with the art of behaving like an ordinary gentleman in what looked like a real drawing-room. The characters are very old stagers, very thinly "humanized." Captain Hawtrey may look natural now in the hands of Mr. Fred Kerr; but he began by being a very near relation of the old stage "swell," who pulled his moustache, held a single eyeglass between his brow and cheekbone, said "Haw, haw" and "By Jove," and appeared in every harlequinade in a pair of white trousers which were blacked by the clown instead of his boots. Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, defending his idealized early impressions as Berlioz defended the forgotten Dalayrac, pleads for Eccles as "a great and vital tragi-comic figure." But the fond plea cannot be allowed. Eccles is caricatured

in the vein and by the methods which Dickens had made obvious; and the implied moral view of his case is the common Pharisaic one of his day. Eccles and Gerridge together epitomize mid-century Victorian shabby-genteel ignorance of the working classes. Polly is comic relief pure and simple; George and Esther have nothing but a milkcan to differentiate them from the heroes and heroines of a thousand sentimental dramas; and though Robertson happens to be quite right — contrary to the prevailing opinion among critics whose conception of the aristocracy is a theoretic one — in representing the " Marquizzy " as insisting openly and jealously on her rank, and, in fact, having an impenitent and resolute flunkeyism as her class characteristic, yet it is quite evident that she is not an original study from life, but simply a ladyfication of the conventional haughty mother whom we lately saw revived in all her original vulgarity and absurdity at the Adelphi in Maddison Morton's " All that Glitters is not Gold," and who was generally associated on the stage with the swell from whom Captain Hawtrey is evolved. Only, let it not be forgotten that in both there really is a humanization, as humanization was understood in the 'sixties: that is, a discovery of saving sympathetic qualities in personages thitherto deemed beyond redemption. Even theology had to be humanized then by the rejection of the old doctrine of eternal punishment. Hawtrey is a good fellow, which the earlier " swell " never was; the Marquise is dignified and affectionate at heart, and is neither made ridiculous by a grotesque headdress nor embraced by the drunken Eccles; and neither of them is attended by a supercilious footman in plush whose head is finally punched powderless by Sam Gerridge. And if from

these hints you cannot gather the real nature and limits of the tiny theatrical revolution of which Robertson was the hero, I must leave you in your perplexity for want of time and space for further exposition.

Of the performance I need say nothing. "Caste" is a task for amateurs: if its difficulties were doubled, the Court company could without effort play it twice as well as it need be played. Mr. Hare's Eccles is the *tour de force* of a refined actor playing a coarse part; but it is all the more enjoyable for that. Of the staging I have one small criticism to offer. If George D'Alroy's drawing-room is to be dated by a cluster of electric lights, Sam Gerridge must not come to tea in corduroy trousers, dirty shirt-sleeves, and a huge rule sticking out of his pocket. No "mechanic" nowadays would dream of doing such a thing. A stockbroker in moleskins would not be a grosser solecism.

But if Robertson begins to wear a little, what is to be said of Augier? The version of his "Mariage d'Olympe" produced last week at the Comedy was ten times more obsolete than "Caste," though Augier's was a solider talent than Robertson's. The Robertsonian "humanity," with its sloppy insistence on the soft place that is to be found in everybody — especially in the most hopelessly worthless people — was poor enough; but it was better than the invincible ignorance which could conscientiously produce such a tissue of arrant respectability worshipping folly as "Le Mariage d'Olympe." Augier was a true bourgeois: when he observed a human impulse that ran counter to the habits of his class, it never occurred to him that it opened a question as to their universal propriety. To him those habits were "morality"; and what was counter to them was "nostalgie de la boue." Accord-

ingly, the play is already a ridiculous inversion of moral order. Stupid and prejudiced old gentlemen are doubtless childish enough in their objection to rowdy daughters-in-law to wish occasionally that they would die; but they don't shoot them on principle; and the fact that Augier was driven to such a foolish solution is in itself a damning criticism of his play. But it is amusing and not uninteresting to watch Olympe nowadays, and note how completely her "nostalgie de la boue" is justified as against the dull and sensual respectability of the father-in-law. In fact, the play now so plainly shows that it is better for a woman to be a liar and a rapscallion than a mere lady, that I should be inclined to denounce it as dangerously immoral if there were no further and better alternatives open to her.

Miss Eleanor Lane, a very capable American actress, played Olympe efficiently; and Mrs. Rose Vernon-Paget made a distinct hit by giving a character sketch of the detrimental mother on which Granny Stephens at her best could not have improved. Mr. Bell played the dashing man-about-town as such parts used to be played in the days of H. J. Byron; and Mrs. Theodore Wright was particularly good as the wife of the Vindicator of Family Honor, who was better treated by Mr. Gurney than he deserved.

LORENZACCIO

Lorenzaccio: a drama in five acts, by Alfred de Musset. Adapted for the stage by M. Armand d'Artois. Adelphi Theatre, 17 June, 1897.

WHAT was the Romantic movement? I don't know, though I was under its spell in my youth. All I can say is that it was a freak of the human imagination, which created an imaginary past, an imaginary heroism, an imaginary poetry out of what appears to those of us who are no longer in the vein for it as the show in a theatrical costumier's shop window. Everybody tells you that it began with somebody and ended with somebody else; but all its beginners were anticipated; and it is going on still. Byron's Laras and Corsairs look like the beginning of it to an elderly reader until he recollects "The Castle of Otranto"; yet "The Castle of Otranto" is not so romantic as Otway's "Venice Preserved," which, again, is no more romantic than the tales of the knights errant beloved of Don Quixote. Romance is always, I think, a product of *ennui*, an attempt to escape from a condition in which real life appears empty, prosaic and boresome — therefore essentially a gentlemanly product. The man who has grappled with real life, flesh to flesh and spirit to spirit, has little patience with fools' paradises. When Carlyle said to the emigrants, "Here and now is your America," he spoke as a realist to romanticists; and Ibsen was of the same mind when he finally decided that there is more tragedy in the next suburban villa than in a whole imaginary Italy of unauthentic Borgias. Indeed, in our present

phase, romance has become the literary trade of imaginative weaklings who have neither the energy to gain experience of life nor the genius to divine it: wherefore I would have the State establish a public Department of Literature, which should affix to every romance a brief *dossier* of the author. For example: — "The writer of this story has no ascertainable qualifications for dealing with the great personages and events of history. His mind is stored with fiction, and his imagination inflamed with alcohol. Hie books, full of splendid sins, in no respect reflect his life, as he is too timid not to be conventionally respectable, and has never fought a man or tempted a woman. He cannot box, fence, or ride, and is afraid to master the bicycle. He appears to be kept alive mainly by the care of his wife, a plain woman, much worn by looking after him and the children. He is unconscious that he has any duties as a citizen; and the Secretary of State for Literature has failed to extract from him any intelligible answer to a question as to the difference between an Urban Sanitary Authority and the Holy Roman Empire. The public are therefore warned to attach no practical importance to the feats of swordsmanship, the breakneck rides, the intrigues with Semiramis, Cleopatra and Catherine of Russia, and the cabinet councils of Julius Cæsar, Charlemagne, Richelieu and Napoleon, as described in his works; and he is hereby declared liable to quadruple assessment for School Board rates in consideration of his being the chief beneficiary, so far, by the efforts made in the name of popular education to make reading and writing coextensive with popular ignorance."

For all that, the land of dreams is a wonderful place; and the great Romancers who found the key of its

gates were no Alnaschars. These artists, inspired neither by faith and beatitude, nor by strife and realization, were neither saints nor crusaders, but pure enchanters, who conjured up a region where existence touches you delicately to the very heart, and where mysteriously thrilling people, secretly known to you in dreams of your childhood, enact a life in which terrors are as fascinating as delights; so that ghosts and death, agony and sin, become, like love and victory, phases of an unaccountable ecstacy. Goethe bathed by moonlight in the Rhine to learn this white magic, and saturated even the criticism and didacticism of "Faust" with the strangest charm by means of it. Mozart was a most wonderful enchanter of this kind: he drove very clever men — Oublicheff, for example — clean out of their wits by his airs from heaven and blasts from hell in "Le Nozze di Figaro" and "Don Giovanni." From the middle of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century Art went crazy in its search for spells and dreams; and many artists who, being neither Mozarts nor Goethes, had their minds burnt up instead of cleansed by "the sacred fire," yet could make that fire cast shadows that gave unreal figures a strange majesty, and phantom landscapes a "light that never was on sea or land." These phrases which I quote were then the commonplaces of critics' rhapsodies.

To-day, alas! — I mean thank goodness! — all this rhapsodizing makes people stare at me as at Rip Van Winkle. The lithographs of Delacroix, the ghostly tamtam march in "Robert the Devil," the tinkle of the goat's bell in "Dinorah," the illustrations of Gustave Doré, mean nothing to the elect of this stern generation but an unintelligible refuse of bad drawing, barren, ugly

orchestral tinkering, senseless and debased ambition. We have been led forth from the desert in which these mirages were always on the horizon to a land overflowing with reality and earnestness. But if I were to be stoned for it this afternoon by fervent Wagnerites and Ibsenites, I must declare that the mirages were once dear and beautiful, and that the whole Wagnerian criticism of them, however salutary (I have been myself one of its most ruthless practitioners), has all along been a pious dialectical fraud, because it applies the tests of realism and revelation to the arts of illusion and transfiguration. From the point of view of the Building Act the palaces built by Mr. Brock, the pyrotechnist, may be most pestilent frauds; but that only shows that Mr. Brock's point of view is not that of the Building Act, though it might be very necessary to deliberately force that criticism on his works if real architecture showed signs of being seduced by the charms of his colored fires. It was just such an emergency that compelled Wagner to resort to the pious dialectical fraud against his old romanticist loves. Their enchantments were such that their phantasms, which genius alone could sublimate from real life, became the models after which the journeyman artist worked and was taught to work, blinding him to nature and reality, from which alone his talent could gain nourishment and originality, and setting him to waste his life in outlining the shadows of shadows, with the result that Romanticism became, at second hand, the blight and dry rot of Art. Then all the earnest spirits, from Ruskin and the pre-Raphaelites to Wagner and Ibsen, rose up and made war on it. Salvator Rosa, the romantic painter, went down before the preaching of Ruskin as Delacroix has gone down before the prac-

tice of John Maris, Von Uhde, and the "impressionists" and realists whose work led up to them. Meyerbeer was brutally squelched, and Berlioz put out of countenance, by the preaching and practice of Wagner. And after Ibsen — nay, even after the cup-and-saucer realists — we no longer care for Schiller; Victor Hugo, on his spurious, violently romantic side, only incommodes us; and the spirit of such a wayward masterpiece of Romanticism as Alfred de Musset's "Lorenzaccio" would miss fire with us altogether if we could bring ourselves to wade through the morass of pseudo-mediæval Florentine chatter with which it begins.

De Musset, though a drunkard, with his mind always derelict in the sea of his imagination, yet had the sacred fire. "Lorenzaccio" is a reckless play, broken up into scores of scenes in the Shakespearean manner, but without Shakespeare's workmanlike eye to stage business and to cumulative dramatic effect; for half these scenes lead nowhere; and the most gaily trivial of them — that in which the two children fight — is placed in the fifth act, *after* the catastrophe, which takes place in the fourth. According to all the rules, the painter Tebaldeo must have been introduced to stab somebody later on, instead of merely to make Lorenzaccio feel like a cur; Filippo Strozzi is a Virginius-Lear wasted; the Marquise was plainly intended for something very fine in the seventeenth act, if the play ever got so far; and Lorenzaccio's swoon at the sight of a sword in the first act remains a mystery to the end of the play. False starts, dropped motives, no-thoroughfares, bewilder the expert in "construction" all through; but none the less the enchanter sustains his illusion: you are always in the Renaissant Italian city of the Romanticist imagination, a mur-

derous but fascinating place; and the characters, spectral as they are, are yet as distinct and individual as Shakespeare's, some of them — Salviati, for instance, — coming out with the rudest force in a mere mouthful of lines. Only, the force never becomes realism: the romantic atmosphere veils and transfigures everything: Lorenzaccio himself, though his speeches bite with the suddenest vivacity, never emerges from the mystic twilight of which he seems to be only a fantastic cloud, and no one questions the consistency of the feet stealing through nameless infamy and the head raised to the stars. In the Romantic school horror was naturally akin to sublimity.

In the Romantic school, too, there was nothing incongruous in the man's part being played by a woman, since the whole business was so subtly pervaded by sex instincts that a woman never came amiss to a romanticist. To him she was not a human being or a fellow-creature, but simply the incarnated divinity of sex. And I regret to add that women rather liked being worshipped on false pretences at first. In America they still do. So they play men's parts fitly enough in the Romantic school; and the contralto in trunk hose is almost a natural organic part of romantic opera. Consequently, the announcement that Sarah Bernhardt was to play Lorenzaccio was by no means incongruous and scandalous, as, for instance, a proposal on her part to play the Master Builder would have been. Twenty years ago, under the direction of a stage manager who really understood the work, she would probably have given us a memorable sensation with it. As it is — well, as it is, perhaps you had better go and judge for yourself. A stall will only cost you a guinea.

Perhaps I am a prejudiced critic of French acting, as it seems to me to be simply English acting fifty years out of date, always excepting the geniuses like Coquelin and Réjane, and the bold pioneers like Lugné Poë and his company. The average Parisian actor was quaint and interesting to me at first; and his peculiar mechanical cadence, which he learns as brainlessly as a costermonger learns his street cry, did not drive me mad as it does now. I have even wished that English actors were taught their alphabet as he is taught his. But I have worn off his novelty by this time; and I now perceive that he is quite the worst actor in the world. Every year Madame Bernhardt comes to us with a new play, in which she kills somebody with any weapon from a hairpin to a hatchet; intones a great deal of dialogue as a sample of what is called "the golden voice," to the great delight of our curates, who all produce more or less golden voices by exactly the same trick; goes through her well-known feat of tearing a passion to tatters at the end of the second or fourth act, according to the length of the piece; serves out a certain ration of the celebrated smile; and between whiles gets through any ordinary acting that may be necessary in a thoroughly businesslike and competent fashion. This routine constitutes a permanent exhibition, which is refurnished every year with fresh scenery, fresh dialogue, and a fresh author, whilst remaining itself invariable. Still, there are real parts in Madame Bernhardt's repertory which date from the days before the travelling show was opened; and she is far too clever a woman, and too well endowed with stage instinct, not to rise, in an off-handed, experimental sort of way, to the more obvious points in such an irresistible new part as Magda. So I had hopes,

when I went to see "Lorenzaccio," that the fascination which, as Dona Sol, she once gave to "Hernani," might be revived by De Musset's romanticism. Those hopes did not last a minute after her first entry. When the retort "*Une insulte de prêtre doit se faire en latin*" was intoned on one note with Melissindian sweetness, like a sentimental motto out of a cracker, I concluded that we were to have no Lorenzaccio, and that poor De Musset's play was only a new pretext for the old exhibition. But that conclusion, though sound in the main, proved a little too sweeping. Certainly the Lorenzaccio of De Musset, the filthy wretch who is a demon and an angel, with his fierce, serpent-tongued repartees, his subtle blasphemies, his cynical levity playing over a passion of horror at the wickedness and cowardice of the world that tolerates him, is a conception which Madame Bernhardt has failed to gather from the text — if she has troubled herself to gather any original imaginative conception from it, which I cannot help doubting. But the scene of the stealing of the coat of mail, with its incorporated fragment of the earlier scene with the painter, was excellently played; and the murder scene was not a bad piece of acting of a heavy conventional kind, such as a good Shakespearean actor of the old school would turn on before killing Duncan or Desdemona, or in declaiming "Oh that this too too solid flesh would melt!" I seriously suggest to Madame Bernhardt that she might do worse than attempt a round of Shakespearean heroes. Only, I beg her not to get M. Armand d'Artois to arrange Shakespeare's plays for the stage as he has so kindly arranged "Lorenzaccio."

The company supporting Madame Bernhardt is, as far as I can judge, up to standard requirements. They

delivered De Musset's phrases in the usual French manner, so that the words "Alexandre de Médicis" rang through my head all night like "extra special" or "Tuppence a barskit." Only one actor succeeded in pronouncing "Strozzi" properly; and even he drew the line at Venturi, which became frankly French. And yet when Mr. Terriss, with British straightforwardness, makes the first syllable in Valclos rhyme to "hall," and pronounces "Contesse" like contest with the final t omitted, the British playgoer whispers that you would never hear a French actor doing such a thing. The truth is that if Mr. Terriss were to speak as we have often heard M. Mounet Sully speak, he would be removed to an asylum until he showed signs of returning humanity. As a rule, when an Englishman can act, he knows better than to waste that invaluable talent on the stage; so that in England an actor is mostly a man who cannot act well enough to be allowed to perform anywhere except in a theatre. In France, an actor is a man who has not common sense enough to behave naturally. And that, I imagine, is just what the English actor was half a century ago.

GHOSTS AT THE JUBILEE

Ghosts. By Henrik Ibsen. The Independent Theatre, Queen's Gate Hall, South Kensington, 24, 25, and 26 June, 1897.

THE Jubilee and Ibsen's "Ghosts"! On the one hand the Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury: on the other, Mrs. Alving and Pastor Manders. Stupendous contrast! how far reflected in the private consciousness of those two august persons there is no means of ascertaining. For though of all the millions for the nourishment of whose loyalty the Queen must submit to be carried through the streets from time to time, not a man but is firmly persuaded that her opinions and convictions are exact facsimiles of his own, none the less she, having seen much of men and affairs, may quite possibly be a wise woman and worthy successor of Canute, and no mere butt for impertinent and senseless Jubilee odes such as their perpetrators dare not, for fear of intolerable domestic scorn and ridicule, address to their own wives or mothers. I am myself cut off by my profession from Jubilees; for loyalty in a critic is corruption. But if I am to avoid idolizing kings and queens in the ordinary human way, I must carefully realize them as fellow-creatures. And so, whilst the nation was burning war incense in a thousand cannons before the throne at Spithead, I was wondering, on my way home from "Ghosts," how far life had brought to the Queen the lessons it brought to Mrs. Alving. For Mrs. Alving is not anybody in particular: she is a typical figure of the experienced, intelligent woman who, in passing

from the first to the last quarter of the hour of history called the nineteenth century, has discovered how appallingly opportunities were wasted, morals perverted, and instincts corrupted, not only — sometimes not at all — by the vices she was taught to abhor in her youth, but by the virtues it was her pride and uprightness to maintain.

Suppose, then, the Queen were to turn upon us in the midst of our jubilation, and say, "My Lords and Gentlemen: You have been good enough to describe at great length the changes made during the last sixty years in science, art, politics, dress, sport, locomotion, newspapers, and everything else that men chatter about. But have you not a word to say about the change that comes home most closely to me? I mean the change in the number, the character, and the intensity of the lies a woman must either believe or pretend to believe before she can graduate in polite society as a well-brought-up lady." If Her Majesty could be persuaded to give a list of these lies, what a document it would be! Think of the young lady of seventy years ago, systematically and piously lied to by parents, governesses, clergymen, servants, everybody; and slapped, sent to bed, or locked up in the bedevilled and beghosted dark at every rebellion of her common sense and natural instinct against sham religion, sham propriety, sham decency, sham knowledge, and sham ignorance. Surely every shop-window picture of "the girl Queen" of 1837 must tempt the Queen of 1897 to jump out of her carriage and write up under it, "Please remember that there is not a woman earning twenty-four shillings a week as a clerk to-day who is not ten times better educated than this unfortunate girl was when the crown dropped on her head, and left her to reign by

her mother wit and the advice of a parcel of men who to this day have not sense enough to manage a Jubilee, let alone an Empire, without offending everybody." Depend on it, seventy-eight years cannot be lived through without finding out things that queens do not mention in Adelphi melodramas. Granted that the Queen's consort was not a Chamberlain Alving, and that the gaps made in a wide, numerous and robust posterity are too few for even Ibsen to see in the dissoluteness of the ancestors of the First Gentleman in Europe any great menace to the longevity of their descendants; still nineteenth-century life, however it may stage-manage itself tragically and sensationally here, or settle itself happily and domestically there, is yet all of one piece; and it is possible to have better luck than Mrs. Alving without missing all her conclusions.

Let us therefore guard ourselves against the gratuitous, but just now very common, assumption that the Queen, in her garnered wisdom and sorrow, is as silly as the noisiest of her subjects, who see in their ideal Queen the polar opposite of Mrs. Alving, and who are so far right that the spirit of "Ghosts" is unquestionably the polar opposite of the spirit of the Jubilee. The Jubilee represents the nineteenth century proud of itself. "Ghosts" represents it loathing itself. And how it *can* loathe itself when it gets tired of its money! Think of Schopenhauer and Shelley, Lassalle and Karl Marx, Ruskin and Carlyle, Morris and Wagner and Ibsen. How fiercely they rent the bosom that bore them! How they detested all the orthodoxies, and respectabilities, and ideals we have just been bejubilating! Of all their attacks, none is rasher or fiercer than "Ghosts." And yet, like them all, it is perfectly

unanswerable. Many generations have laughed at comedies like "L'Etourdi," and repeated that hell is paved with good intentions; but never before have we had the well-brought-up, high-minded nineteenth-century lady and her excellent clergyman as the mischief-makers. With them the theme, though still in its essence comic, requires a god to laugh at it. To mortals who may die of such blundering it is tragic and ghastly.

The performance of "Ghosts" by the Independent Theatre Society left the two previous productions by the same society far behind. As in the case of "The Wild Duck," all obscurity vanished; and Ibsen's clearness, his grip of his theme, and the rapidity, directness and intensity of the action of the piece produced the effect they can always be depended on to produce in capable hands, such as Mr. Charrington's, so far alone among those of Ibsenite stage-managers, have proved to be. Mrs. Theodore Wright's Mrs. Alving, originally an achievement quite beyond the culture of any other actress of her generation, is still hardly less peculiar to her. Mrs. Wright's technique is not in the least that of the Ibsen school. Never for a moment would you suspect her of having seen Miss Janet Achurch or any one remotely resembling her. She is unmistakably a contemporary of Miss Ellen Terry. When I first saw her act she was playing Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing," with a charm and intuition that I have not seen surpassed, and should not have seen equalled if I had never seen Miss Terry wasting her gifts on Shakespeare. As it happened, Mrs. Theodore Wright, perhaps because she was so fond of acting that the stage, where there is less opportunity for it than anywhere else in England, bored her intolerably, found

her way behind the scenes of the revolutionary drama of the century at a time when the happy ending now in progress had not been reached, and played Shakespeare and recited Shelley, Hood and George Eliot before Karl Marx, Morris, Bradlaugh and other volcanic makers of the difference between 1837 and 1897, as proudly as Talma played to his pit of kings. Her authors, it will be seen, were not so advanced as her audiences; but that could not be helped, as the progressive movement in England had not produced a dramatist; and nobody then dreamt of Norway, or knew that Ibsen had begun the drama of struggle and emancipation, and had declared that the really effective progressive forces of the moment were the revolt of the working classes against economic, and of the women against idealistic, slavery. Such a drama, of course, immediately found out that weak spot in the theatrical profession which Duse put her finger on the other day in Paris — the so-called stupidity of the actors and actresses. Stupidity, however, is hardly the word. Actors and actresses are clever enough on the side on which their profession cultivates them. What is the matter with them is the characteristic narrowness and ignorance of their newly conquered conventional respectability. They are now neither above the commonplaces of middle-class idealism, like the aristocrat and poet, nor below them, like the vagabond and Bohemian. The theatre has become very much what the Dissenting chapel used to be: there is not a manager in London who, in respect of liberality and enlightenment of opinion, familiarity and sympathy with current social questions, can be compared with the leaders of Nonconformity. Take Sir Henry Irving and Dr. Clifford for example. The "Dissenter" is a couple of centuries

ahead of the actor: indeed, the comparison seems absurd, so grotesquely is it to the disadvantage of the institution which still imagines itself the more cultured and less prejudiced of the two. And, but for Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, the authors would cut as poor a figure from this point of view as the actors. Duse advises actors to read; but of what use is that? They *do* read — more than is good for them. They read the drama, and are eager students of criticism, though they would die rather than confess as much to a critic. (Whenever an actor tells me, as he invariably does, that he has not seen any notices of his performance, I always know that he has the "Saturday Review" in his pocket; but I respect the delicacy of an evasion which is as instinctive and involuntary as blushing.) When the drama loses its hold on life, and criticism is dragged down with it, the actor's main point of intellectual contact with the world is cut off; for he reads nothing else with serious attention. He then has to spin his culture out of his own imagination or that of the dramatist and critics, a facile but delusive process which leaves nothing real to fall back on but his technical craft, which may make him a good workman, but nothing else.

If even technical craft became impossible at such a period — say through the long run and the still longer tour destroying the old training without replacing it by a new one — then the gaps in the actor's cultivation and the corresponding atrophied patches in his brain would call almost for a Mission for his Intellectual Reclamation. Something of this kind might have happened in our own time — I am not sure that a few cases of it did not actually happen — if Ibsen had not come to the rescue. At all events, things had gone so

far that the reigning generation of actor-managers were totally incapable of understanding Ibsen: his plays were not even grammar and spelling to them, much less drama. That what they found there was the life of their own time; that its ideas had been seething round their theatres for years past; that they themselves, chivalrously "holding up the banner of the ideal" in the fool's paradise of theatrical romance and sentiment, had served Ibsen, as they formerly served Goethe, as reductions-to-absurdity of that divorce of the imagined life from the real which is the main peril of an age in which everybody is provided with the means of substituting reading and romancing for real living: all this was quite outside their comprehension. To them the new phenomenon was literally "the Ibsen craze," a thing bound to disappear whilst they were rubbing their eyes to make sure that they saw the absurd monster clearly. But that was exactly Mrs. Theodore Wright's opportunity. A lady who had talked over matters with Karl Marx was not to be frightened by Pastor Manders. She created Mrs. Alving as easily, sympathetically, and intelligently as Miss Winifred Emery or Miss Kate Rorke will create the heroine of the next adaptation from the French drama of 1840 by Mr. Grundy; and by that one step she walked over the heads of the whole profession, I cannot say into the first intellectual rank as an English actress, because no such rank then existed, but into a niche in the history of the English stage the prominence of which would, if they could foresee it, very considerably astonish those who think that making history is as easy as making knights. (The point of this venomous allusion will not be missed. It is nothing to be a knight-actor now that there are two of them.

When will Sir Henry Irving bid for at least a tiny memorial inscription in the neighborhood of Mrs. Theodore Wright's niche?)

The remarkable success of Mr. Courtenay Thorpe in Ibsen parts in London lately, and the rumors as to the sensation created by his Oswald Alving in America, gave a good deal of interest to his first appearance here in that part. He has certainly succeeded in it to his heart's content, though this time his very large share of the original sin of picturesqueness and romanticism broke out so strongly that he borrowed little from realism except its pathologic horrors. Since Miss Robins's memorable exploit in "Alan's Wife" we have had nothing so harrowing on the stage; and it should be noted, for guidance in future experiments in audience torture, that in both instances the limit of the victims' susceptibility was reached before the end of the second act, at which exhaustion produced callousness. Mrs. Alving, who spared us by making the best of her sorrows instead of the worst of them, preserved our sympathy up to the last; but Oswald, who showed no mercy, might have been burnt alive in the orphanage without a throb of compassion. Mr. Leonard Outram improved prodigiously on his old impersonation of Pastor Manders. In 1891 he was still comparatively fresh from the apprenticeship as a heroic rhetorical actor which served him so well when he played Valence to Miss Alma Murray's Colombe for the Browning Society; and his stiff and cautious performance probably meant nothing but cleverly concealed bewilderment. This time Mr. Outram really achieved the character, though he would probably please a popular audience better by making more of that babyish side of him which excites the indulgent affection of Mrs. Alving,

and less of the moral cowardice and futility posing as virtue and optimism which brings down on him the contemptuous judgment of Ibsen himself. Miss Kingsley's attractions, made as familiar to us by the pencil of Mr. Rothenstein as Miss Dorothy Dene's by that of Leighton, were excellently fitted to Regina; and Mr. Norreys Connell, after a somewhat unpromising beginning, played Engstrand with much zest and humor.

MR. GRUNDY'S IMPROVEMENTS ON DUMAS

The Silver Key: a comedy in four acts, adapted from Alexandre Dumas' "Mlle. de Belleisle" by Sydney Grundy. Her Majesty's Theatre, 10 July, 1897.

I MUST say I take the new Dumas adaptation in anything but good part. Why on earth cannot Mr. Grundy let well alone? Dumas *père* was what Gounod called Mozart, a summit in art. Nobody ever could, or did, or will improve on Mozart's operas; and nobody ever could or did or will improve on Dumas' romances and plays. After Dumas you may have Dumas-and-water, or you may have, in Balzac, a quite new and different beginning; but you get nothing above Dumas on his own mountain: he is the summit, and if you attempt to pass him you come down on the other side instead of getting higher. Mr. Grundy's version of the "Mariage sous Louis Quinze" did not suggest that he was in the absurd position of being the only expert in the world who did not know this;

but the chorus of acclamation with which we greeted that modest and workmanlike achievement seems to have dazzled him; for in his version of "Mademoiselle de Belleisle" he treats us to several improvements of his own, some of them pruderies which spare us nothing of the original except its wit; others, like the dreams and the questioning of the servant in her mistress's presence by the jealous lover, wanton adulterations; and all, as it seems to me, blunders in stagecraft. They remind me of the "additional accompaniments" our musicians used to condescend to supply when an opera by some benighted foreigner of genius was produced here. If Mr. Grundy were a painter and composer as well as a dramatist, I dare say he could rescore "Don Giovanni" and repaint Velasquez' Philip to the entire satisfaction of people who know no better; but if he were an artist, he would not want to do so, and would feel extremely indignant with any one who did. I hope I am no fanatic as to the reverence with which the handiwork of a great man should be treated. If Dumas had failed to make any point in his story clear, then I should no more think of blaming Mr. Grundy for putting in a speech, or even a little episode, to elucidate it, than I blame Wagner for helping out Beethoven in the Ninth Symphony in places where the most prominent melody in the written score was, as a matter of physical fact, inaudible when performed, or where there were distortions caused by deficiencies in instruments since provided with a complete scale. But "Mademoiselle de Belleisle" is expounded by its author with a dramatic perspicacity far beyond our most laborious efforts at play construction; and the net result of Mr. Grundy's meddling is that the audience does not fully understand until the end of the

third act (the original fourth) the mistake on which the whole interest of the scene in the second (third) between Richelieu and the two lovers depends. It is almost as if Mr. Grundy were to adopt "Cymbeline," which is the same play with a slight difference of treatment, and to send the audience home with the gravest doubts as to what really took place between Iachimo and Imogen. The resource of "construction" cannot reasonably be denied to authors who have not the natural gift of telling a story; but when the whole difficulty might have been avoided by dealing faithfully with the work of one of the best storytellers, narrative or dramatic, that ever lived, I feel driven to express myself shrewishly. As to the ending of the play with a crudely dragged in title-tag ("The Silver King" or something like it), it is — well, I do not wish to be impolite; so I will simply ask Mr. Grundy whether he really thinks highly of it himself.

The acting at Her Majesty's is not precisely what one calls exquisite; and for perfect interpretation of Dumas acting should be nothing less. Such delicacy of execution as there is on our stage never comes within a mile of virtuosity. As virtuosity in manners was the characteristic mode of eighteenth-century smart society, it follows that we get nothing of the eighteenth century at Her Majesty's, except that from time to time the persons of the drama alarm us by suddenly developing symptoms of strychnine poisoning, which are presently seen to be intended for elaborate bows and curtseys. This troubles the audience very little. The manners of Mr. Tree and Mr. Waller are better than eighteenth-century manners; and I, for one, am usually glad to exchange old lamps for new ones in this particular. But it takes no very subtle critic to

see that the exchange makes the play partly incredible. Mr. Waller suffers more in this respect than Mr. Tree, because his late-nineteenth-century personality is hopelessly incompatible with the eighteenth-century cut-and-dried ideals of womanhood and chivalry of the hero he represents. Mr. Tree is in no such dilemma. The lapse of a century has left Richelieu (described by Macaulay as "an old fop who had passed his life from sixteen to sixty in seducing women for whom he cared not one straw") still alive and familiar. What people call vice is eternal: what they call virtue is mere fashion. Consequently, though Mr. Waller's is the most forcible acting in the piece — though he alone selects and emphasizes the dramatically significant points which lead the spectator clearly through the story, yet his performance stands out flagrantly as a *tour de force* of acting and not as life; whilst Mr. Tree, who makes no particular display of his powers as an actor except for a moment in the duel with dice, produces a quite sufficient illusion.

There is one quality which is never absent in Dumas, and never present in English performances of him; and that is the voluntary naïveté of humorous clearsightedness. Dumas' invariable homage to the delicacy of his heroines and the honor of his heroes has something in it of that *maxima reverentia* which the disillusionment of mature age pays to the innocence of youth. He handles his lovers as if they were pretty children, giving them the charm of childhood when he can, and unconsciously betraying a wide distinction in his own mind between the ideal virtues which he gives them as a romantic sinner might give golden candlesticks to a saint's altar, and the real ones which he is prepared to practise as well as preach — high personal loyalty, for

instance. Hence it is that his stories are always light-hearted and free from that pressure of moral responsibility without which an Englishman would burst like a fish dragged up from the floor of the Atlantic deeps. At Her Majesty's the two performers with the strongest sense of comedy — Mrs. Tree and Mr. Lionel Brough — do contrive to bear the burden of public morality easily; but the rest carefully clear themselves of all suspicion of Continental levity: even Richelieu contrives to convey that whatever may happen in the Marquise's bedroom, he will be found at the strait gate in the narrow way punctually at eleven the next Sunday morning. As to Miss Millard, she impersonated Mademoiselle de Belleisle with the most chastising propriety. She evidently knew all about Richelieu's ways from the beginning, and was simply lying in wait for effective opportunities of pretending to be amazed and horrified at them. I have seen nothing more lady-like on the stage. It was magnificent; but it was not Dumas.

Miss Gigia Filippi — sister, I presume, to that clever actress Miss Rosina Filippi — played the waiting-maid Mariette according to a conception of her art upon which I shall preach a little sermon, because I believe it to be a misleading conception, and because nevertheless it is one which no less an exponent of stage art than Miss Ellen Terry has carried out with undeniable success. It came about, as I guess, in this way. Miss Terry, as we all know, went on the stage in her childhood, and not only "picked-up" her profession, but was systematically taught it by Mrs. Charles Kean, with the result that to this day her business is always thoroughly well done, and her part gets over the footlights to the ends of the house without

loss of a syllable or the waste of a stroke. But if Mrs. Charles Kean qualified her to be the heroine of a play, Nature presently qualified her to be the heroine of a picture by making her grow up quite unlike anybody that had ever been seen on earth before. I trust Nature has not broken the mould: if she has, Miss Terry's portraits will go down to posterity as those of the only real New Woman, who was never repeated afterwards. The great painters promptly pounced on her as they did on Mrs. Morris and Mrs. Stillman. She added what she learnt in the studio to what she had already learnt on the stage so successfully that when I first saw her in "Hamlet" it was exactly as if the powers of a beautiful picture of Ophelia had been extended to speaking and singing. It was no doubt her delight in this pictorial art that made her so easily satisfied with old-fashioned rhetorical characters which have no dramatic interest for any intelligent woman nowadays, much less for an ultra-modern talent like Miss Terry's. When she came to the "touches of nature" in such characters (imagine a school of drama in which nature is represented only by "touches"!) she seized on them with an enjoyment and a tender solicitude for them that showed the born actress; but after each of them she dropped back into the pictorial as unquestioningly as Patti, after two bars of really dramatic music in an old-fashioned aria, will drop back into purely decorative roulade. And here you have the whole secret of the Lyceum: a drama worn by age into great holes, and the holes filled up with the art of the picture gallery. Sir Henry Irving as King Arthur, going solemnly through a Crummles broadsword combat with great beauty of deportment in a costume designed by Burne-Jones is the *reductio-ad-*

absurdum of it. Miss Ellen Terry as a beautiful living picture in the vision in the prologue is its open reduction to the art to which it really belongs. And Miss Ellen Terry as Madame Sans-Gêne is the first serious struggle of dramatic art to oust its supplanter and reclaim the undivided service of its wayward daughter.

The most advanced audiences to-day, taught by Wagner and Ibsen (not to mention Ford Madox Brown), cannot stand the drop back into decoration after the moment of earnest life. They want realistic drama of complete brainy, passional texture all through, and will not have any pictorial stuff or roulade at all — will not even have the old compromise by which drama was disguised and denaturalized in adaptations of the decorative forms. The decorative play, with its versified rhetoric, its timid little moments of feeling and blusterous big moments of raving nonsense, must now step down to the second-class audience, which is certainly more numerous and lucrative than the first-class, but is being slowly dragged after it in spite of its reinforcement of its resistance by the third-class audience hanging on to its coat tails. It screams and kicks most piteously during the process; but it will have to submit; for the public must finally take willy-nilly, what its greatest artists choose to give it, or else do without art. And so even the second-class public, though it still likes plenty of pictorial beauty and distinction (meaning mostly expensiveness and gentility) in the setting, and plenty of comfortable optimistic endearment and cheap fun in the substance, nevertheless needs far more continuous drama to bind the whole together and compel sustained attention and interest than it did twenty years ago. Consequently the woman who now comes on the stage with carefully cultivated

qualifications as an artist's model, and none as an actress, no longer finds herself fitting exactly into leading parts even in the fashionable drama of the day, and automatically driving the real actresses off the stage. Miss Ellen Terry innocently created a whole school of such pictorial leading ladies. They went to the Lyceum, where, not being skilled critics, they recognized the heroine's pictorial triumphs as art, whilst taking such occasional sallies of acting as the Shakespearean "touches of nature" admitted of as the spontaneous operation of Miss Terry's own charming individuality. I am not sure that I have not detected that simple-minded Terry theory in more critical quarters. The art, of course, lay on the side where it was least suspected. The nervous athleticism and trained expertness which have enabled Miss Terry, without the least appearance of violence, to hold her audiences with an unfailing grip in a house which is no bandbox, and where really weak acting, as we have often seen, drifts away under the stage door and leaves the audience coughing, are only known by their dissimulative effect: that is, they are not known at all for what they really are; whereas the pictorial business, five-sixths of which is done by trusting to nature, proceeds, as to the other sixth, by perfectly obvious methods. In this way, an unenlightened observation of Miss Ellen Terry produced the "æsthetic" actress, or living picture. Such a conception of stage art came very easily to a generation of young ladies whose notions of art were centred by the Slade School and the Grosvenor Gallery.

Now Miss Gigia Filippi is original enough not to directly imitate Miss Terry or any other individual artist. But I have never seen the pictorial conception

carried out with greater industry and integrity. Miss Filippi was on the stage when the curtain went up; and before it was out of sight I wanted a kodak. Every movement ended in a picture, not a Burne-Jones or Rossetti, but a dark-eyed, red-cheeked, full-lipped, pearly-toothed, coquettish Fildes or Van Haanen. The success of the exhibition almost justified the labor it must have cost. But that is not acting. It is a string that a finished actress may add to her bow if she has the faculty for it, like Miss Terry; but as a changeling for acting it will not do, especially in a play by Dumas. When Miss Filippi speaks, she takes pains to make her voice soft and musical; but as she has never had a competent person sitting in the gallery to throw things at her head the moment she became unintelligible, the consonants often slip away unheard, and nothing remains but a musical murmur of vowels, soothing to the ear, but baffling and exasperating to people whose chief need at the moment is to find out what the play is about. On the other side of the Haymarket Miss Dairolles has a precisely similar part. Miss Dairolles seeks first to live as the clever lady's-maid of the play in the imagination of the audience; and all the other things are added unto her without much preoccupation on her part. Miss Filippi prefers to stand composing pretty pictures, and exhibiting each of them for nearly half a minute, instead of for the tenth part of a second, as a skilled actress would. Now an effect prolonged for even an instant after artists and audience have become conscious of it is recognized as an end with the artist instead of a means, and so ceases to be an effect at all. It is only applauded by Partridge, with his "anybody can see that the king is an actor," or, in Miss Filippi's case, by dramatically obtuse paint-

ers and Slade School students on the watch for pictures everywhere. I earnestly advise Miss Filippi to disregard their praises and set about finding a substitute for Mrs. Charles Kean at once.

"HAMLET"

2 October, 1897.

THE Forbes Robertson "Hamlet" at the Lyceum is, very unexpectedly at that address, really not at all unlike Shakespeare's play of the same name. I am quite certain I saw Reynaldo in it for a moment; and possibly I may have seen Voltimand and Cornelius; but just as the time for their scene arrived, my eye fell on the word "Fortinbras" in the programme, which so amazed me that I hardly know what I saw for the next ten minutes. Ophelia, instead of being a strenuously earnest and self-possessed young lady giving a concert and recitation for all she was worth, was mad — actually mad. The story of the play was perfectly intelligible, and quite took the attention of the audience off the principal actor at moments. What is the Lyceum coming to? Is it for this that Sir Henry Irving has invented a whole series of original romantic dramas, and given the credit of them without a murmur to the immortal bard whose profundity (as exemplified in the remark that good and evil are mingled in our natures) he has just been pointing out to the inhabitants of Cardiff, and whose works have been no more to him than the word-quarry from which he has hewn and blasted the lines and titles of masterpieces which are really all his own? And now, when he has created

by these means a reputation for Shakespeare, he no sooner turns his back for a moment on London than Mr. Forbes Robertson competes with him on the boards of his own theatre by actually playing off against him the authentic Swan of Avon. Now if the result had been the utter exposure and collapse of that impostor, poetic justice must have proclaimed that it served Mr. Forbes Robertson right. But alas! the wily William, by literary tricks which our simple Sir Henry has never quite understood, has played into Mr. Forbes Robertson's hands so artfully that the scheme is a prodigious success. The effect of this success, coming after that of Mr. Alexander's experiment with a Shakespearean version of "As You Like It," makes it almost probable that we shall presently find managers vieing with each other in offering the public as much of the original Shakespearean stuff as possible, instead of, as heretofore, doing their utmost to reassure us that everything that the most modern resources can do to relieve the irreducible minimum of tedium inseparable from even the most heavily cut acting version will be lavished on their revivals. It is true that Mr. Beerbohm Tree still holds to the old scepticism, and calmly proposes to insult us by offering us Garrick's puerile and horribly caddish knockabout farce of "Katherine and Petruchio" for Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew"; but Mr. Tree, like all romantic actors, is incorrigible on the subject of Shakespeare.

Mr. Forbes Robertson is essentially a classical actor, the only one, with the exception of Mr. Alexander, now established in London management. What I mean by classical is that he can present a dramatic hero as a man whose passions are those which have produced the philosophy, the poetry, the art, and the statecraft of

the world, and not merely those which have produced its weddings, coroner's inquests, and executions. And that is just the sort of actor that Hamlet requires. A Hamlet who only understands his love for Ophelia, his grief for his father, his vindictive hatred of his uncle, his fear of ghosts, his impulse to snub Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and the sportsman's excitement with which he lays the "mouse-trap" for Claudius, can, with sufficient force or virtuosity of execution, get a great reputation in the part, even though the very intensity of his obsession by these sentiments (which are common not only to all men but to many animals), shows that the characteristic side of Hamlet, the side that differentiates him from Fortinbras, is absolutely outside the actor's consciousness. Such a reputation is the actor's, not Hamlet's. Hamlet is not a man in whom "common humanity" is raised by great vital energy to a heroic pitch, like Coriolanus or Othello. On the contrary, he is a man in whom the common personal passions are so superseded by wider and rarer interests, and so discouraged by a degree of critical self-consciousness which makes the practical efficiency of the instinctive man on the lower plane impossible to him, that he finds the duties dictated by conventional revenge and ambition as disagreeable a burden as commerce is to a poet. Even his instinctive sexual impulses offend his intellect; so that when he meets the woman who excites them he invites her to join him in a bitter and scornful criticism of their joint absurdity, demanding "What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth?" "Why would'st thou be a breeder of sinners?" and so forth, all of which is so completely beyond the poor girl that she naturally thinks him mad. And, indeed,

there is a sense in which Hamlet is insane; for he trips over the mistake which lies on the threshold of intellectual self-consciousness: that of bringing life to utilitarian or Hedonistic tests, thus treating it as a means instead of an end. Because Polonius is "a foolish prating knave," because Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are snobs, he kills them as remorselessly as he might kill a flea, showing that he has no real belief in the superstitious reason which he gives for not killing himself, and in fact anticipating exactly the whole course of the intellectual history of Western Europe until Schopenhauer found the clue that Shakespeare missed. But to call Hamlet mad because he did not anticipate Schopenhauer is like calling Marcellus mad because he did not refer the Ghost to the Psychical Society. It is in fact not possible for any actor to represent Hamlet as mad. He may (and generally does) combine some notion of his own of a man who is the creature of affectionate sentiment with the figure drawn by the lines of Shakespeare; but the result is not a madman, but simply one of those monsters produced by the imaginary combination of two normal species, such as sphinxes, mermaids, or centaurs. And this is the invariable resource of the instinctive, imaginative, romantic actor. You will see him weeping bucketsful of tears over Ophelia, and treating the players, the gravedigger, Horatio, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as if they were mutes at his own funeral. But go and watch Mr. Forbes Robertson's Hamlet seizing delightedly on every opportunity for a bit of philosophic discussion or artistic recreation to escape from the "cursed spite" of revenge and love and other common troubles; see how he brightens up when the players come; how he tries to talk phi-

losophy with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern the moment they come into the room; how he stops on his country walk with Horatio to lean over the churchyard wall and draw out the gravedigger whom he sees singing at his trade; how even his fits of excitement find expression in declaiming scraps of poetry; how the shock of Ophelia's death relieves itself in the fiercest intellectual contempt for Laertes's ranting, whilst an hour afterwards, when Laertes stabs him, he bears no malice for that at all, but embraces him gallantly and comradely; and how he dies as we forgive everything to Charles II for dying, and makes "the rest is silence" a touchingly humorous apology for not being able to finish his business. See all that; and you have seen a true classical Hamlet. Nothing half so charming has been seen by this generation. It will bear seeing again and again.

And please observe that this is not a cold Hamlet. He is none of your logicians who reason their way through the world because they cannot feel their way through it: his intellect is the organ of his passion: his eternal self-criticism is as alive and thrilling as it can possibly be. The great soliloquy — no: I do NOT mean "To be or not to be": I mean the dramatic one, "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" — is as passionate in its scorn of brute passion as the most bullnecked affirmation or sentimental dilution of it could be. It comes out so without violence: Mr. Forbes Robertson takes the part quite easily and spontaneously. There is none of that strange Lyceum intensity which comes from the perpetual struggle between Sir Henry Irving and Shakespeare. The lines help Mr. Forbes Robertson instead of getting in his way at every turn, because he wants to play Hamlet, and not

to slip into his inky cloak a changeling of quite another race. We may miss the craft, the skill double-distilled by constant peril, the subtlety, the dark rays of heat generated by intense friction, the relentless parental tenacity and cunning with which Sir Henry nurses his own pet creations on Shakespearean food like a fox rearing its litter in the den of a lioness; but we get light, freedom, naturalness, credibility, and Shakespeare. It is wonderful how easily everything comes right when you have the right man with the right mind for it — how the story tells itself, how the characters come to life, how even the failures in the cast cannot confuse you, though they may disappoint you. And Mr. Forbes Robertson has certainly not escaped such failures, even in his own family. I strongly urge him to take a hint from Claudius and make a real ghost of Mr. Ian Robertson at once; for there is really no use in going through that scene night after night with a Ghost who is so solidly, comfortably and dogmatically alive as his brother. The voice is not a bad voice; but it is the voice of a man who does not believe in ghosts. Moreover, it is a hungry voice, not that of one who is past eating. There is an indescribable little complacent drop at the end of every line which no sooner calls up the image of purgatory by its words than by its smug elocution it convinces us that this particular penitent is cosily warming his shins and toasting his muffin at the flames instead of expiating his bad acting in the midst of them. His aspect and bearing are worse than his recitations. He beckons Hamlet away like a beadle summoning a timid candidate for the post of junior footman to the presence of the Lord Mayor. If I were Mr. Forbes Robertson I would not stand that from any brother: I would

cleave the general ear with horrid speech at him first. It is a pity; for the Ghost's part is one of the wonders of the play. And yet, until Mr. Courtenay Thorpe divined it the other day, nobody seems to have had a glimpse of the reason why Shakespeare would not trust any one else with it, and played it himself. The weird music of that long speech which should be the spectral wail of a soul's bitter wrong crying from one world to another in the extremity of its torment, is invariably handed over to the most squaretoed member of the company, who makes it sound, not like Rossetti's "Sister Helen," or even, to suggest a possible heavy treatment, like Mozart's statue-ghost, but like Chambers's Information for the People.

Still, I can understand Mr. Ian Robertson, by sheer force of a certain quality of sententiousness in him, overbearing the management into casting him for the Ghost. What I cannot understand is why Miss Granville was cast for the Queen. It is like setting a fashionable modern mandolinist to play Haydn's sonatas. She does her best under the circumstances; but she would have been more fortunate had she been in a position to refuse the part.

On the other hand, several of the impersonations are conspicuously successful. Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Ophelia is a surprise. The part is one which has hitherto seemed incapable of progress. From generation to generation actresses have, in the mad scene, exhausted their musical skill, their ingenuity in devising fantasias in the language of flowers, and their intensest powers of portraying anxiously earnest sanity. Mrs. Patrick Campbell, with that complacent audacity of hers which is so exasperating when she is doing the wrong thing, this time does the right thing by making

Ophelia really mad. The resentment of the audience at this outrage is hardly to be described. They long for the strenuous mental grasp and attentive coherence of Miss Lily Hanbury's conception of maiden lunacy; and this wandering, silly, vague Ophelia, who no sooner catches an emotional impulse than it drifts away from her again, emptying her voice of its tone in a way that makes one shiver, makes them horribly uncomfortable. But the effect on the play is conclusive. The shrinking discomfort of the King and Queen, the rankling grief of Laertes, are created by it at once; and the scene, instead of being a pretty interlude coming in just when a little relief from the inky cloak is welcome, touches us with a chill of the blood that gives it its right tragic power and dramatic significance. Playgoers naturally murmur when something that has always been pretty becomes painful; but the pain is good for them, good for the theatre, and good for the play. I doubt whether Mrs. Patrick Campbell fully appreciates the dramatic value of her quite simple and original sketch — it is only a sketch — of the part; but in spite of the occasional triviality of its execution and the petulance with which it has been received, it seems to me to finally settle in her favor the question of her right to the very important place which Mr. Forbes Robertson has assigned to her in his enterprises.

I did not see Mr. Bernard Gould play Laertes: he was indisposed when I returned to town and hastened to the Lyceum; but he was replaced very creditably by Mr. Frank Dyall. Mr. Martin Harvey is the best Osric I have seen: he plays Osric from Osric's own point of view, which is, that Osric is a gallant and distinguished courtier, and not, as usual, from Hamlet's, which is that Osric is "a waterfly." Mr. Harri-

son Hunter hits off the modest, honest Horatio capitally; and Mr. Willes is so good a Gravedigger that I venture to suggest to him that he should carry his work a little further, and not virtually cease to concern himself with the play when he has spoken his last line and handed Hamlet the skull. Mr. Cooper Cliffe is not exactly a subtle Claudius; but he looks as if he had stepped out of a picture by Madox Brown, and plays straightforwardly on his very successful appearance. Mr. Barnes makes Polonius robust and elderly instead of aged and garrulous. He is good in the scenes where Polonius appears as a man of character and experience; but the senile exhibitions of courtierly tact do not match these, and so seem forced and farcical.

Mr. Forbes Robertson's own performance has a continuous charm, interest and variety which are the result not only of his well-known familiar grace and accomplishment as an actor, but of a genuine delight — the rarest thing on our stage — in Shakespeare's art, and a natural familiarity with the plane of his imagination. He does not superstitiously worship William: he enjoys him and understands his methods of expression. Instead of cutting every line that can possibly be spared, he retains every gem, in his own part or any one else's, that he can make time for in a spiritedly brisk performance lasting three hours and a half with very short intervals. He does not utter half a line; then stop to act; then go on with another half line; and then stop to act again, with the clock running away with Shakespeare's chances all the time. He plays as Shakespeare should be played, on the line and to the line, with the utterance and acting simultaneous, inseparable and in fact identical. Not for a moment is he solemnly

conscious of Shakespeare's reputation, or of Hamlet's momentousness in literary history: on the contrary, he delivers us from all these boredoms instead of heaping them on us. We forgive him the platitudes, so engagingly are they delivered. His novel and astonishingly effective and touching treatment of the final scene is an inspiration, from the fencing match onward. If only Fortinbras could also be inspired with sufficient force and brilliancy to rise to the warlike splendor of his helmet, and make straight for that throne like a man who intended to keep it against all comers, he would leave nothing to be desired. How many generations of Hamlets, all thirsting to outshine their competitors in effect and originality, have regarded Fortinbras, and the clue he gives to this kingly death for Hamlet, as a wildly unpresentable blunder of the poor foolish old Swan, than whom they all knew so much better! How sweetly they have died in that faith to slow music, like Little Nell in "The Old Curiosity Shop"! And now how completely Mr. Forbes Robertson has bowled them all out by being clever enough to be simple.

By the way, talking of slow music, the sooner Mr. Hamilton Clarke's romantic Irving music is stopped, the better. Its effect in this Shakespearean version of the play is absurd. The four Offenbachian young women in tights should also be abolished, and the part of the player-queen given to a man. The courtiers should be taught how flatteringly courtiers listen when a king shows off his wisdom in wise speeches to his nephew. And that nice wooden beach on which the ghost walks would be the better for a seaweedy-looking cloth on it, with a handful of shrimps and a pennorth of silver sand.

AT SEVERAL THEATRES

Francillon. From the French of Alexandre Dumas *fils.* A comedy in three acts. Duke of York's Theatre.
As You Like It. Grand Theatre, Islington, 4 October, 1897.
The Liars: a new and original comedy. By Henry Arthur Jones. Criterion Theatre, 6 October, 1897.

I NEVER see Miss Ada Rehan act without burning to present Mr. Augustin Daly with a delightful villa in St. Helena, and a commission from an influential committee of his admirers to produce at his leisure a complete set of Shakespeare's plays, entirely rewritten, reformed, rearranged, and brought up to the most advanced requirements of the year 1850. He was in full force at the Islington Theatre on Monday evening last with his version of "As You Like It" just as I don't like it. There I saw Amiens under the greenwood tree, braving winter and rough weather in a pair of crimson plush breeches, a spectacle to benumb the mind and obscure the passions. There was Orlando with the harmony of his brown boots and tunic torn asunder by a piercing discord of dark volcanic green, a walking tribute to Mr. Daly's taste in tights. There did I hear slow music stealing up from the band at all the well-known recitations of Adam, Jacques and Rosalind, lest we should for a moment forget that we were in a theatre and not in the forest of Arden. There did I look through practicable doors in the walls of sunny orchards into an abyss of pitchy darkness. There saw I in the attitudes, grace and deportment of the forest dwellers the plastique of an Arcadian past. And the music syn-

chronized with it all to perfection, from "La Grande Duchesse" and "Dichter und Bauer," conducted by the leader of the band, to the inevitable old English airs conducted by the haughty musician who is Mr. Daly's special property. And to think that Mr. Daly will die in his bed, whilst innocent presidents of republics, who never harmed an immortal bard, are falling on all sides under the knives of well-intentioned reformers whose only crime is that they assassinate the wrong people! And yet let me be magnanimous. I confess I would not like to see Mr. Daly assassinated; St. Helena would satisfy me. For Mr. Daly was in his prime an advanced man relatively to his own time and place, and was a real manager, with definite artistic aims which he trained his company to accomplish. His Irish-American Yanko-German comedies, as played under his management by Ada Rehan and Mrs. Gilbert, John Drew, Otis Skinner and the late James Lewis, turned a page in theatrical history here, and secured him a position in London which was never questioned until it became apparent that he was throwing away Miss Rehan's genius. When, after the complete discovery of her gifts by the London public, Mr. Daly could find no better employment for her than in a revival of "Dollars and Cents," his annihilation and Miss Rehan's rescue became the critic's first duty. Shakespeare saved the situation for a time, and got severely damaged in the process; but "The Countess Gucki" convinced me that in Mr. Daly's hands Miss Rehan's talent was likely to be lost not only to the modern drama, but to the modern Shakespearean stage: that is to say, to the indispensable conditions of its own fullest development. No doubt starring in Daly Shakespeare is as lucrative and secure as the greatest

of Duse's achievements are thankless and precarious; but surely it must be better fun making money enough by "La Dame aux Camélias" to pay for "Helmat" and "La Femme de Claude," and win the position of the greatest actress in the world with all three, than to astonish provincials with versions of Shakespeare which are no longer up even to metropolitan literary and dramatic standards.

However, since I cannot convert Miss Rehan to my view of the position, I must live in hope that some day she will come to the West End of London for a week or two, just as Réjane and Sarah Bernhardt do, with some work of sufficient novelty and importance to make good the provincial wear and tear of her artistic prestige. Just now she is at the height of her powers. The plumpness that threatened the Countess Gucki has vanished: Rosalind is as slim as a girl. The third and fourth acts are as wonderful as ever — miracles of vocal expression. If "As You Like It" were a typical Shakespearean play, I should unhesitatingly declare Miss Rehan the most perfect Shakespearean executant in the world. But when I think of those plays in which our William anticipated modern dramatic art by making serious attempts to hold the mirror up to nature — "All 's Well," "Measure for Measure," "Troilus and Cressida" and so on — I must limit the tribute to Shakespeare's popular style. Rosalind is not a complete human being: she is simply an extension into five acts of the most affectionate, fortunate, delightful five minutes in the life of a charming woman. And all the other figures in the play are cognate impostures. Orlando, Adam, Jacques, Touchstone, the banished Duke and the rest play each the same tune all through. This is not human nature or dramatic character: it is juve-

nile lead, first old man, heavy lead, heavy father, principal comedian and leading lady, transfigured by magical word-music. The Shakespearolators who are taken in by it do not know drama in the classical sense from "drama" in the technical Adelphi sense. You have only to compare Orlando and Rosalind with Bertram and Helena, the Duke and Touchstone with Leontes and Autolycus, to learn the difference from Shakespeare himself. Therefore I cannot judge from Miss Rehan's enchanting Rosalind whether she is a great Shakespearean actress or not: there is even a sense in which I cannot tell whether she can act at all or not. So far, I have never seen her create a character: she has always practised the same adorable arts on me, by whatever name the playbill has called her — Nancy Brasher (ugh!), Viola, or Rosalind. I have never complained: the drama with all its heroines levelled up to a universal Ada Rehan has seemed no such dreary prospect to me; and her voice, compared to Sarah Bernhardt's *voix d'or*, has been as all the sounds of the woodland to the chinking of twenty-franc pieces. In Shakespeare (what Mr. Daly leaves of him) she was and is irresistible: at Islington on Monday she made me cry faster than Mr. Daly could make me swear. But the critic in me is bound to insist that Ada Rehan has as yet created nothing but Ada Rehan. She will probably never excel that masterpiece; but why should she not superimpose a character study or two on it? Duse's greatest work is Duse; but that does not prevent Césarine, Santuzza and Camille from being three totally different women, none of them Duses, though Duse is all of them. Miss Rehan would charm everybody as Mirandolina as effectually as Duse does. But how about Magda? It is because nobody in England knows the answer to that

question that nobody in England as yet knows whether Ada Rehan is a creative artist or a mere virtuosa.

"The Liars," Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's new comedy, is one of his lighter works, written with due indulgence to the Criterion company and the playgoing public. Its subject is a common enough social episode — a married lady sailing too close to the wind in a flirtation, and her friends and relatives interposing to half hustle, half coax the husband and wife into a reconciliation, and the gallant off to Africa. Mr. Jones has extracted from this all the drama that can be got from it without sacrificing verisimilitude, or spoiling the reassuring common sense of the conclusion. Its interest, apart from its wealth of comedy, lies in its very keen and accurate picture of smart society. Smart society will probably demur, as it always does to views of it obtained from any standpoint outside itself. Mr. Jones's detachment is absolute: he describes Mayfair as an English traveller describes the pygmies or the Zulus, caring very little about the common human perversities of which (believing them, of course, to be the caste-mark of their class) they are so self-importantly conscious, and being much tickled by the morally significant peculiarities of which they are not conscious at all. "Society" is intensely parochial, intensely conceited, and, outside that art of fashionable life for which it has specialized itself, and in which it has acquired a fairly artistic technique, trivial, vulgar and horribly tiresome. Its conceit, however, is not of the personally self-complacent kind. Within its own limits it does not flatter itself: on the contrary, being chronically bored with itself, it positively delights in the most savage and embittered satire at its own expense from its own point of view. For example, Thackeray,

who belonged to it and hated it, is admired and endorsed by it, because, with all his rancor against its failings, he took Hyde Park Corner as the cosmic headquarters, a Ptolemaic mistake which saved his gentility throughout all his Thersites railings at it. Charles Dickens, on the other hand, could never be a gentleman, because it never occurred to him to look at fashionable society otherwise than from the moral and industrial centres of the community, in which position he was necessarily " an outsider " from the point of view of the parishioners of St. James of Piccadilly and St. George of Hanover Square. That this outside position could be a position of advantage, even to a literary lion flatteringly petted and freely fed at the parish tables, is a conception impossible to the insider, since if he thought so, he would at once, by that thought, be placed outside. All fiction which deals with fashionable society as a class exhibits this division into Thackeray and Dickens — into the insider and the outsider. For my own part I recommend the outside, because it is possible for the outsider to comprehend and enjoy the works of the insiders, whereas they can never comprehend his. From Dickens's point of view Thackeray and Trollope are fully available, whilst from their point of view Dickens is deplorable. Just so with Mr. Jones and Mr. Pinero. Mr. Jones's pictures of society never seem truthful to those who see ladies and gentlemen as they see themselves. They are restricted to Mr. Pinero's plays, recognizing in them alone poetic justice to the charm of good society. But those who appreciate Mr. Jones accommodate themselves without difficulty to Mr. Pinero's range, and so enjoy both. In the latest plays of these two authors the difference is very marked. The pictures of fashionable life in " The Princess and the

Butterfly," containing, if we except the mere kodaking, not one stroke that is objectively lifelike or even plausible, is yet made subjectively appropriate in a most acceptable degree by the veil of sentimental romance which it casts over Mayfair. In "The Liars," the "smart" group which carries on the action of the piece is hit off to the life, with the result that the originals will probably feel brutally misrepresented.

And now comes in the oddity of the situation. Mr. Jones, with a wide and clear vision of society, is content with theories of it that have really no relation to his observation. The comedic sentiment of "The Liars" is from beginning to end one of affectionate contempt for women and friendly contempt for men, applied to their affairs with shrewd worldly common sense and much mollifying humor; whilst its essentially pious theology and its absolute conceptions of duty belong to a passionately anti-comedic conception of them as temples of the Holy Ghost. Its observations could only have been made to-day; its idealism might have been made yesterday; its reflections might have been made a long time ago. Against this I am inclined to protest. It is surely immoral for an Englishman to keep two establishments, much more three.

The incongruities arising from the different dates of Mr. Jones's brain compartments have, happily, the effect of keeping his sense of humor continually stirring. I am sure "The Liars" must be an extremely diverting play on the stage. But I have not seen it there. Mr. Wyndham's acting-manager wrote to ask whether I would come if I were invited. I said Yes. Accordingly I was *not* invited. The shock to my self-esteem was severe and unexpected. I desire it to be distinctly understood, however, that I forgive everybody.

The conscientious transliteration (for the most part) of the "Francillon" of Dumas *fils* at the Duke of York's Theatre makes a very tolerable evening's amusement. It is, of course, only here to get hallmarked as a London success, and is planned to impress unsophisticated audiences as an exceedingly dashing and classy representation of high life. Mrs. Brown Potter is unsparing of the beauties of her wardrobe, and indeed of her own person. She seems, as far as I can judge, congenitally incapable of genuine impersonation; but she has coached herself into a capital imitation of a real French actress playing the part, which she thoroughly understands. Saving one or two lapses into clowning for provincial laughs, her performance is not a bad specimen of manufactured acting. The best manufactured acting I ever saw was Modjeska's. It was much stricter, adroiter, finer, cleverer, more elaborate and erudite than Mrs. Brown Potter's; but Modjeska was not genial. Mrs. Brown Potter is genial. Her good looks are unimpaired; and only the very hard-hearted will feel much ill used by her shortcomings, especially as she is well supported in a good play, carefully managed and staged up to the point of making several prolonged passages of pure pantomime quite successful. Mr. Bellew should stay in London a while, to brush away a few trifling stage habits which, like the comedy itself, begin to date a little. He plays with his old grace and much more than his old skill and ease, in the quiet style of the eighties, which is also revived with success by Messrs. Elwood, Thursby and Beauchamp. Mr. J. L. Mackay keeps to his own somewhat later date, not unwisely, as Stanislas.

THE THEATRES

Never Again: a farcical comedy in three acts. By Maurice Desvallières and Antony Mars. Vaudeville Theatre, 11 October, 1897.
One Summer's Day: a love story in three acts. By H. V. Esmond. Comedy Theatre.
The White Heather. By Cecil Raleigh and Henry Hamilton. Drury Lane Theatre.

I CAN hardly estimate offhand how many visits to "Never Again" at the Vaudeville would enable an acute acrostician to unravel its plot. Probably not less than seventeen. It may be that there is really no plot, and that the whole bewildering tangle of names and relationships is a sham. If so, it shows how superfluous a real plot is. In this play every one who opens a door and sees somebody outside it utters a yell of dismay and slams the door to as if the fiend in person had knocked at it. When anybody enters a room, he or she is received with a roar of confusion and terror, and frantically ejected by bodily violence. The audience does not know why; but as each member of it thinks he ought to, and believes that his neighbor does, he echoes the yell of the actor with a shout of laughter; and so the piece "goes" immensely. It is, to my taste, a vulgar, stupid, noisy, headachy, tedious business. One actor, Mr. Ferdinand Gottschalk, shows remarkable talent, both as actor and mimic, in the part of a German musician; but this character is named Katzenjammer, which can produce no effect whatever on those who do not know what it means, and must sicken those who do. There is of course a Shakespearean precedent

in "Twelfth Night"; but even in the spacious times of great Elizabeth they did not keep repeating Sir Toby's surname all over the stage, whereas this play is all Katzenjammer: the word is thrown in the face of the audience every two or three minutes. Unfortunately this is only part of the puerile enjoyment of mischief and coarseness for their own sakes which is characteristic not so much of the play as of the method of its presentation. And as that method is aggressively American, and is apparently part of a general design on Mr. Charles Frohman's part to smarten up our stage habits by Americanizing them, it raises a much larger question than the merits of an insignificant version of a loose French farce.

I need hardly point out to intelligent Americans that any difference which exists between American methods and English ones must necessarily present itself to the American as an inferiority on the part of the English, and to the Englishman as an inferiority on the part of the Americans; for it is obvious that if the two nations were agreed as to the superiority of any particular method, they would both adopt it, and the difference would disappear, since it can hardly be seriously contended that the average English actor cannot, if he chooses, do anything that the average American actor can do, or vice versa. Consequently nothing is more natural and inevitable than that Mr. Frohman, confronted with English stage business, should feel absolutely confident that he can alter it for the better. But it does not at all follow that the English public will agree with him. For example, if in a farcical comedy a contretemps is produced by the arrival of an unwelcome visitor, and the English actor extricates himself from the difficulty by half bowing, half coax-

ing the intruder out, it may seem to Mr. Frohman much funnier and livelier that he should resort to the summary and violent methods of a potman, especially if the visitor is an elderly lady. Now I do not deny that Mr. Frohman may strike on a stratum of English society which will agree with him, nor even that for twenty years to come the largest fortunes made in theatrical enterprise may be made by exploiting that stratum; but to English people who have learnt the art of playgoing at our best theatres, such horseplay is simply silly. Again, it may seem to Mr. Frohman, as it did once (and probably does still) to Mr. Augustin Daly, that the way to work every act of a comedy up to a rattling finish is to upset chairs, smash plates, make all the women faint and all the men tumble over one another. But in London we are apt to receive that sort of thing so coldly even in its proper place in the rallies of a harlequinade that there is no temptation to West End managers to condescend to it. The truth is, all this knockabout stuff, these coarse pleasantries about women's petticoats, Katzenjammer, and so forth, belong, not to American civilization, but to American barbarism. It converts what might be, at worst, a wittily licentious form of comedy for licentiously witty people into a crude sort of entertainment for a crude sort of audience. The more it tries to hustle and bustle me into enjoying myself, the more does it put me on my most melancholy dignity, and set me reflecting funereally on the probable future of a race nursed on such amusements. To save myself from pessimism I have to remind myself that neither in America nor here is the taste for them a mature taste, and that the Americans in particular are so far from being its partisans that they rate English

acting and English methods far higher than we do ourselves.

There is, however, a heavy account on the other side. The routine of melodrama and farcical comedy is not a fine art: it is an industry; and in it the industrial qualities of the Americans shine out. Their companies are smarter, better drilled, work harder and faster, waste less time, and know their business better than English companies. They do not select duffers when they can help it; and though the duffer may occasionally get engaged *faute de mieux*, as a dog gets eaten during a siege, he does not find that there is a living for him in melodrama, and so gets driven into the fashionable drama of the day, in which he will easily obtain engagements if he convinces the manager that he is a desirable private acquaintance. A good deal of the technique acquired by American actors no doubt makes one almost long for the fatuous complacency of the British "walker-on"; but still it is at least an accomplishment which raises its possessor above the level of an unskilled laborer; and the value of a well-directed systematic cultivation of executive skill will be appreciated by any one who compares the speech of Miss Maud Jeffries and the physical expertness of Miss Fay Davis with those of English actresses of their own age and standing. Now in so far as Mr. Frohman's Americanizations tend to smarten the organization of English stage business, and to demand from every actor at least some scrap of trained athleticism of speech and movement, they are welcome. So far, too, as the influence of a bright, brainy people, full of fun and curiosity, can wake our drama up from the half-asleep, half-drunk delirium of brainless sentimentality in which it is apt to wallow, it will be a good influence. But in

so far as it means mechanical horseplay, prurient pleasantries, and deliberate nastiness of the Katzenjammer order, it is our business to reform the Americans, not theirs to reform us. When it comes to the stupidities, follies and grossnesses of the stage, we may safely be left to our native resources, which have never yet failed us in such matters.

The only notable addition to the Vaudeville company is Mr. Allan Aynesworth, who keeps up the fun with an unsparing devotion to a bad play which must be extremely touching to the author. I do not believe he understands the plot, because no man can do what is impossible; but he quite persuades the audience that he does.

"One Summer's Day" at the Comedy Theatre is a play written by Mr. Esmond to please himself. Some plays are written to please the author; some to please the actor-manager (these are the worst); some to please the public; and some — my own, for instance — to please nobody. Next to my plan, I prefer Mr. Esmond's; but it undoubtedly leads to self-indulgence. When Mr. Esmond, in the third act of a comedy, slaughters an innocent little boy to squeeze two pennorth of sentiment out of his mangled body, humanity protests. If Mr. Esmond were hard to move, one might excuse him for resorting to extreme measures. But he is, on the contrary, a highly susceptible man. He gets a perfect ocean of sentiment out of Dick and Dick's pipe. If you ask who Dick was, I reply that that is not the point. It is in the name Dick — in its tender familiarity, its unaffected good-nature, its modest sincerity, its combination of womanly affectionateness with manly strength, that the charm resides. If you say that the name Dick does not convey this to

you, I can only say that it does to Mr. Esmond when associated with a pipe; and that if your imagination is too sluggish or prosaic to see it, then that is your misfortune and not Mr. Esmond's fault. He cherishes Dick more consistently than Thackeray cherished Colonel Newcome; for he tells you nothing unpleasant, and indeed nothing credible, about him; whereas Thackeray, being daimonic as well as sentimental, must paint his Colonel remorselessly as a fool, humbug and swindler with one hand, whilst vainly claiming the world's affection for him with the other. Dick's drawbacks are not hinted at. Provided you take him on trust, and Maysie on trust, and indeed everybody else on trust, "One Summer's Day" is a quite touching play. Mr. Hawtrey has finally to dissolve in tears, like the player in "Hamlet"; and he does it like a true comedian: that is, in earnest, and consequently almost distressingly. That is the penalty of comedianship: it involves humanity, which forbids its possessor to enjoy grief. Your true pathetic actor is a rare mixture of monstrous callousness and monstrous vanity. To him suffering means nothing but a bait to catch sympathy. He enjoys his malingering; and so does the audience. Mr. Hawtrey does not enjoy it; and the result is an impression of genuine grief, which makes it seem quite brutal to stare at him. Fortunately, this is only for a moment, at the end of the play, just after Mr. Esmond's massacre of the innocent. For the rest, he is as entertaining as ever, and happily much smoother, pleasanter, sunnier and younger than Mr. Esmond evidently intended Dick to be. I really could not have stood Dick if he had gone through with the Dobbin-Newcome formula, and robbed good-nature of grace and self-respect. The comic part of the play

has a certain youthfully mischievous quality, which produces good entertainment with a lovesick schoolboy, excellently played by Mr. Kenneth Douglas, and an impossible but amusing urchin impersonated by Master Bottomley. But Mrs. Bendyshe, whose part is so poor that it would conquer Mrs. Charles Calvert if she were conquerable, which it seems she is not, and Mr. Bendyshe, one of her husbands (she seemed to have two), exhibit Mr. Esmond as descending from the dignity of dramatic authorship to lark boyishly at the expense of his elderly fellow-creatures. Miss Eva Moore's Maysie secures the success of the piece, though the part is not difficult enough to tax her powers seriously.

The Drury Lane play proves Mr. Arthur Collins to be every whit as competent a manager of Harrisian drama as the illustrious founder of that form of art was himself. In fact, Mr. Collins, as a younger man, with a smarter and more modern standard, does the thing rather better. Sir Augustus, lavish as to the trappings and suits of his fashionable scenes, was reckless as to the presentability of their wearers. Compare Mr. Collins's cycling parade in Battersea Park, for instance, with Sir Augustus's church parade in Hyde Park! There is no reason to suppose that Battersea has cost a farthing more; yet it is ten times more plausible. It is not given to all "extra ladies" to look ladylike in proportion to the costliness of their attire: on the contrary, many of them have the gift of looking respectable in the uniform of a parlormaid, or even in a shawl, gown, apron and ostrich-feathered hat, but outrageous and disreputable in a fashionable frock confected by an expensive modiste. Now whether Sir Augustus knew the difference, and cynically selected

the disreputable people as likely to be more attractive to the sailorlike simplicity of the average playgoer, or whether he had a bad eye for such distinctions, just as some people have a bad ear for music, there can be no doubt that not even the Vicar of Wakefield could have been imposed on by his fashionable crowds. Mr. Collins is much more successful in this respect. As I saw "The White Heather" from a rather remote corner of the stalls, distance may have lent my view some enchantment; but as far as I could see, Mr. Collins does not, if he can help it, pay an extravagant sum for a dress, and then put it on the back of a young lady who obviously could not have become possessed of it by ladylike means. His casting of principal parts is also much better: he goes straight to the mark with Mrs. John Wood where Sir Augustus would have missed it with Miss Fanny Brough (an habitually underparted tragi-comic actress); and he refines the whole play by putting Miss Kate Rorke and Miss Beatrice Lamb into parts which would formerly have been given respectively to a purely melodramatic heroine and villainess. Indeed he has in one instance overshot the mark in improving the company; for though he has replaced the usual funny man with a much higher class of comedian in Mr. De Lange, the authors have abjectly failed to provide the actor with anything better than the poorest sort of clowning part; and as Mr. De Lange is not a clown, he can only help the play, at a sacrifice of "comic relief," by virtually suppressing the buffoonery with which the authors wanted to spoil it. In short, everything is improved at Drury Lane except the drama, which, though very ingeniously adapted to its purpose, and not without flashes of wit (mostly at its own expense), remains as mechanical

and as void of real dramatic illusion as the equally ingenious contrivances of the lock up the river, the descent of the divers and their combat under the sea, the Stock Exchange, and the reproduction of the costume ball at Devonshire House.

Naturally, though there is plenty of competent acting that amply fulfils the requirements of the occasion, the principals have nothing to do that can add to their established reputations. Mr. Robert Loraine as Dick Beach was new to me; but he played so well that I concluded that it was I, and not Mr. Loraine, who was the novice in the matter.

ROMANCE IN ITS LAST DITCH

The Vagabond King: a play in four acts. By Louis N. Parker. Theatre Metropole, Camberwell. 18 October, 1897.

THE production of Mr. Louis Parker's play at a suburban theatre last Monday was an expected development in an unexpected place. A few years ago some of the central theatres began trying very hard which could stoop lowest to meet the rising tide of popular interest in fiction of all sorts. Most of the attempts failed because they went back to the obsolete methods of the days when audiences were illiterate as well as ignorant. Now audiences are still ignorant; but they are no longer illiterate: on the contrary, they are becoming so bookish that they actually repudiate and ridicule clap-trap and sentiment of purely theatrical extraction, and must have both

adapted to a taste educated by inveterate novel-reading. Formerly a man who had never read a novel but knew the stage and the playgoing public, was a more trustworthy provider of artificial substitutes for genuine drama than the cleverest novelist. Nowadays the old stager is the most fatal of advisers; and "The Prisoner of Zenda," "Trilby," and "Under the Red Robe," all three specifically literary plays, have swept from the boards the rival attempts that were being made to Whitechapelize the West End theatres on the old stagey lines. And it is significant that when a literary play failed, however deservedly, it was respected in the midst of its misfortunes, whereas the stagey plays failed with the extremity of derision, disgrace, and loss of caste for their promoters.

One of the advantages of the literary play was that it was very easy to act. It completed the process, by that time far advanced, of adapting the drama to the incompetent acting produced by the long run and tour system. But it is not possible under a system of competitive commerce in theatrical entertainments to maintain extravagant prices for cheap commodities and facile services. Time was when I demanded again and again what the theatres were offering that could induce any sensible person to leave his comfortable suburban fireside, his illustrated magazines and books, his piano and his chessboard, to worry his way by relays of omnibus, train and cab to seek admission to a stuffy theatre at a cost of a guinea for comfortable seats for himself and his wife. I prophesied the suburban theatre, following my usual plan of prophesying nothing that is not already arrived and at work (and therefore sure to be discovered by the English Press generally in from ten to fifty years). Well, the suburban theatre

has come with a rush. The theatre within ten minutes' walk, the four-shilling stall, the twopenny programme, the hours admitting of bed before midnight, have only to be combined with an entertainment equal in quality to that of the West End houses to beat them out of the field. So far from there being any difficulty about such a combination, the suburban theatres may be safely defied to produce anything worse than many of the central theatres have been unblushingly offering for some years past. The acting is as likely as not to be better; for snobbery behind the scenes at the West End houses has led to a steady squeezing-out of the trained and skilled actor who makes no pretension to fashion in private life, as well as the artistic enthusiast who is necessarily unconventional and revolutionary in personal ideas and conduct, and the replacement of both by society-struck actors and stage-struck wealthy amateurs. In tailor-made plays the man who is an actor off the stage and a man of fashion on it gets displaced by the competitor who is a man of fashion off the stage and a duffer on it. I say nothing of the preference of actor-managers for nice fellows and moderately good actors, since the superseded actors are not likely to let that be forgotten, though they are naturally slow to confess that what they lack is an air of belonging to "the Marlborough House set" or some such nonsense. If an exact estimate could be made of the average skill of the well-known actors who have been for the last few years mostly out of engagement and those who have been mostly in it, the balance would perhaps not be against the unemployed. Such unemployment is the opportunity of the suburban manager, who does not concern himself with the set to which the members of his com-

pany belong, and has no interest in preventing them from attaining the maximum of popularity. Consequently, when once the good actors who do not affect smart society are starved out of waiting vainly for West End engagements, it is possible that the suburban actor may beat the fashionable actor out of the field too.

Finally, let us hope, the cards will be completely reshuffled, and the central theatres will have either to shut up shop or else give an entertainment beyond the reach of suburban art and suburban prices. Mr. Forbes Robertson is doing that at the Lyceum at present: consequently the suburban theatres, far from damaging him, are, as Sir Henry Irving foresaw, simply acting as nurseries of playgoers for him. But take the case of the "triple bill" which has just vanished from the Avenue, perhaps as a judgment for playing Mozart's "Figaro" overture between the acts with big drum and cymbals *ad lib.* à la Offenbach. The triple bill was not bad of its kind: seen from a half-crown seat at the Lyric Hall, Ealing, it would have been excellent value. But why should any man in his senses have gone miles and paid half a guinea to see it? Take, again, such a play as "My Friend the Prince." Is it conceivable that the actors now performing it at the Fulham Grand Theatre, even if they do not play quite as well as the original company at the Garrick (and I have no reason to suppose they don't), do not at least act it as well as it need be acted, and get just as loud laughs when the gentleman sits down on his spur, and all the men come in at the end in the same disguise? Or take the rough-and-tumble farcical comedy at the Vaudeville! Am I to be told that Mr. Mulholland could not do everything for that piece at

Camberwell that Mr. Frohman is doing for it in the Strand, without raising his prices one farthing, or even making any particularly expensive engagement?

It looks, then, as if the West End theatre were to be driven back on serious dramatic art after all. Of course there will always be the sort of West End production, supported by deadheads, which is nothing but a preliminary advertisement for the tour of "a London success." Personal successes will be made in very bad plays by popular favorites like Miss Louie Freear and Mr. Penley. But legitimate business at high-priced West End houses must at last be forced in the direction of better plays, probably with the extreme runs shorter than at present, but most likely with the average run longer. And the better plays will make short work of the incompetent fashionable actor. When Mr. Forbes Robertson was wasting his energies on fashionable plays at the Garrick with Miss Kate Rorke, there was not a pin to choose between him and any other fashionable leading man. In Hamlet and Joseph Surface there are a good many thousand pounds to choose. When the plays that are no plays are all driven to the suburbs, the actors who are no actors will have to go after them; and then perhaps the actors who are actors will come back.

This is why I began by saying that what has just happened at the Camberwell Theatre was the expected coming in an unexpected place. The higher class of play has appeared, not at the West End, but in the suburbs. The reappearance of a once famous actress for whom the fashionable stage found no use, and of a few younger people who had exposed themselves to West End managerial suspicion by the exhibition of a specific professional talent and skill, has occurred

on the same occasion. That, however, is a mere accident. A year ago no West End manager would have considered a play of the class of "The Vagabond King" commercially practicable. A year or so hence managers in search of "high-class drama" will probably be imploring Mr. Parker to let them have something as high as possible above the heads of the public. Thus does the whirligig of time bring its revenges.

Whoever has glanced at the notices of Mr. Parker's play will have gathered here and there that there is something wrong with it. Now what I wish to convey is that there is something right with it, and that this something right is exactly the something wrong of which my romantic colleagues complain. It is true that they too find something right with it — something "beautiful and true," as they call it; but to me this bit of romantic beauty and truth is a piece of immoral nonsense that spoils the whole work. If Mr. Parker wishes to get on safe ground as a dramatist, he must take firm hold of the fact that the present transition from romantic to sincerely human drama is a revolutionary one, and that those who make half-revolutions dig their own graves. Nothing is easier than for a modern writer only half weaned from Romance to mix the two, especially in his youth, when he is pretty sure to have romantic illusions about women long after he has arrived at a fairly human view of his own sex. This is precisely what has happened to Mr. Parker. Into the middle of an exiled court which has set up its mock throne in furnished lodgings in London, and which he has depicted in an entirely disillusioned human manner, he drops an ultra-romantic heroine. If this were done purposely, with the object of reducing the romantic to absurdity, and preaching the worth of the

real, there are plenty of works, from "Don Quixote" to "Arms and the Man," to justify it as the classic formula of the human school in its controversial stage. Or if it were done with the shallower purpose of merely enjoying the fantastic incongruity of the mixture, then we should have at once the familiar formula of comic opera. But when it is done unconsciously — when the artist designs his heroine according to an artificial convention of moral and physical prettiness, and confessedly draws all the rest in the light of a perception of "the true meaning of life," the result is the incongruity of comic opera without its fun and fantasy, and the Quixote belittlement of romance without its affirmation of the worth of reality. Mr. Parker's Vagabond King married to Stella Desmond is like Balzac's Mercadet married to Black Eyed Susan. Whoever has come to a clear understanding with himself as between romance and reality will be able to follow with perfect intelligence the waverings of Mr. Louis Parker's play between failure and success. When Miss Lena Ashwell gets the play completely on the romantic plane, and makes the audience for the moment unconscious of all other planes by acting so beautifully saturated with feeling as to appear almost religious (it has been plain to the wise, any time these two years, that Miss Ashwell was on the way to a high place in her art), the audience is satisfied and delighted to the seventh heaven. But she makes it impossible for the King and the parasites of the exiled Court to get their scenes definitely on the realistic plane. At her romantic pitch they are out of tune; for the audience, accustomed to that pitch, conceives that they are flat rather than she sharp. If the effect were reversed, the play would be irretrievably ruined by their reduction of her

to absurdity. For, judged by serious human standards she is an objectionable and mischievous person. She begins by conniving with the King's mother to entrap him into prostitution. She allows him to ruin and degrade himself, and to beggar her, in the true romantic manner, so that she may be able to make a "sacrifice." In the end she spoils the moral of the play and utterly discredits his discovery of "the true meaning of life," and his resolution to live by honest toil, by enabling him to face their stern realities from the comfortable vantage ground of a pretty cottage at Highgate and a charming wife with money enough left to indulge in the smartest frocks. Nothing could be further from the true meaning of life; nothing could pander more amiably and abjectly to that miserable vital incapacity to which life at its imagined best means only what a confectioner's shop-window means to a child. It is quite clear that no such experience as that of the Vagabond King could redeem any man: one might as well try to refine gold by holding it to the spark of a glowworm. The woman declares that she has sacrificed this, that and the other, and has nothing left but love (the cottage and dresses not being worth mentioning); but as a matter of fact she has neither lost nor gained one jot or tittle, being exactly the same unmeaning romantic convention at the end of the play as at the beginning.

When the world gets a serious fit, and the desire for a true knowledge of the world and a noble life in it at all costs arises in men and lifts them above lusting for the trivial luxuries and ideals and happy endings of romance, romance repudiated by art and challenged by religion, falls back on its citadel, and announces that it has given up all the pomps and vanities of this wicked

world, and recognizes that nothing is eternally valid and all-redeeming but Love. That is to say, the romanticist is blind enough to imagine that the humanist will accept the abandonment of all his minor lies as a bribe for the toleration of the most impudent of all lies. "I am willing to be redeemed, and even religious," says the converted romanticist, "if only the business be managed by a pretty woman who will be left in my arms when the curtain falls." And this is just how the Vagabond King gets out of his difficulties. Has Mr. Parker, a disciple of Richard Wagner, forgotten these lines? —

> "Nicht Gut, nicht Gold, noch göttliche Pracht;
> nicht Haus, nicht Hof, noch herrischer Prunk;
> nicht trüber Verträge trügender Bund,
> noch heuchelnder Sitte hartes Gesetz:
> selig in Lust und Leid *lässt die Liebe nur sein.*"

There is the arch lie formulated by the master's hand! But when he completed the work by finding the music for the poem, he found no music for that: the Nibelungen score is guiltless of it. I presume Wagner had by that time made up his mind that a world in which all the women were piously willing to be redeemed by a Siegfried, and all the men by a Brynhild, would find their way to the bottomless pit by quite as short a cut as the most cynical of the voluptuaries who enjoy themselves without claiming divine honors for their passions. Mr. Parker may take my word for it, that Vagabond King of his will be damned yet, in spite of pretty Stella Desmond, unless he can find a means to save himself. He that would save his soul (not get it saved for him) must first lose it; and he must lose it in earnest, and not keep back a pretty woman and a

cottage at Highgate after the prudent manner of Ananias.

Though this be an adverse criticism, yet it is no small compliment to Mr. Parker that he has come within reach of it. He has fallen like many another artist before him, through woman worship, "arter all, an amiable weakness," as the elder Weller observed of wife-beating, which is another mode of the same phenomenon. However "beautiful and true" may be his assumption that the best woman is far better than the best man, and however loathsome and cynical may be my assumption that she is not — nay, that as women are treated at present she is almost certain, other things being equal, to be a good deal worse — I venture to think that Mr. Parker will find that more convincing plays can be got out of my assumption than out of his. At the same time I am bound to add that the very worst real woman I ever knew was better than Mr. Parker's paragon, whose conduct, like that of all romantic heroines, will not stand a moment's serious investigation.

The play has a cast which would rank as a strong one at any West End theatre. Besides Miss Bateman and Miss Lena Ashwell, there is Miss Phyllis Broughton. Mr. Murray Carson is the Vagabond King; Mr. George Grossmith, junior, the other King, both supported by a Court including Mr. Sidney Brough, Mr. Gilbert Farquhar, and Mr. L. D. Mannering, who will be remembered for some remarkable work in Elizabethan drama.

VEGETARIAN AND ARBOREAL

The Fanatic: a new and original play, in four acts, by John T. Day. Strand Theatre, 21 October, 1897.
The Tree of Knowledge: a new and original play, in five acts, by R. C. Carton. St. James's Theatre, 25 October, 1897.

AN anti-vegetarian play is an unexpected but not unwelcome novelty. Hitherto the ideas of dramatists on the food question have been limited to a keen sense of the effect on the poorer section of the audience of a liberal display at every possible opportunity of spirit stands, siphons, and bottles; so that the elaborate interiors may combine the charms of the private and the public house. I am always asking myself whether it is toast and water or whether it is real; and, if the latter, how much extra salary an actor receives for the injury to his liver involved in repeated exhibitions to the gallery of the never-palling spectacle of a gentleman taking an expensive drink. But now we have a dramatist who makes the whole interest of his play depend on a passionate faith in the nutritiousness of a cutlet and a glass of wine. The result is at least more real and interesting than Mr. Carton's five-act stage romance at the St. James's. But for an unsound theory of alimentation, and an unhappy relapse into more-than-Cartonic romance at the end, it would be an excellent comedy.

The heroine of "The Fanatic" marries a vegetarian teetotaller, who proceeds to feed her at a rate which may be faintly estimated from the fact that her break-

fast alone consists of hominy porridge, tapioca omelette, and cucumber pie. If she were an elephant working out a sentence of hard labor, she might possibly be able to get exercise enough to keep pace with such Gargantuan meals. As she is only a rather sedentary lady, they speedily ruin her complexion and render her incapable of assimilating any nourishment at all. The doctor is called in; and I should unhesitatingly rank Mr. Day with Molière as a delineator of doctors if I could pretend not to see that he takes his modern Diafoirus with awestruck seriousness, and without the least comedic intention. Nevertheless we have had no better bit of comedy this season, nor any truer to life, than this foolish fashionable doctor instantly diagnosing a glaring case of over-feeding as one of "starvation," and flying Diafoiresquely into a raging condition of academic indignation with the husband for repudiating his prescription of the glass of wine and the cutlet. It is to be observed, as a curious illustration of our notions of family morals, that it never occurs to the doctor or to any one else in the play to question the husband's right to dictate what his wife shall eat as absolutely as if she were a convict and he the prison doctor — nay, almost as if he were a farmer and she one of his ewes being fattened for market. And the doctor's right to dictate what the husband shall order is only disputed in order to prove the lunacy of the man who questions it. The unfortunate patient's own views are left completely out of account. "She shall have cutlet and marsala," says the doctor. "She shan't," says the husband: "she shall have cucumber pie and cocoa." "Cucumber pie is n't food: she 'll die of it," says the doctor. "Cucumber pie *is* food," retorts the husband: "here 's

a pamphlet which proves it." And so on. The question is one of cucumbers versus corpses, of the husband's authority versus the doctor's authority: never for a moment is it suggested that a short way out of the difficulty would be to allow the lady to order her own dinner. When they go on from the food question to the drink question they reach the summit of conceited absurdity. "I insist on her having wine," screams the doctor: "if she don't, she 'll die." "Let her die," says the husband: "I 'm a teetotaller, and would rather see her in her grave than allow her to drink alcohol."

Here you have the comedy in which Molière delighted — the comedy of lay ignorance and incapacity confronting academic error and prejudice: the layman being right in theory and wrong in practice, the academician wrong in theory and right in practice. Unfortunately, though Mr. Day observes the conflict very accurately, he does not understand it, and takes sides vehemently with the doctor, even whilst faithfully dramatizing the dispute on the lines of a wrangle between two African witches as to the merits of their rival incantations. The doctor prescribes his diet of cutlet and wine (which, by the way, would almost at once cure the patient) quite superstitiously, as a charm. The vegetarian prescribes his hominy porridge diet (which he is quite right in supposing to be just as nutritious as a dead sheep) in the same way. Both have irresistible facts on their side. The doctor sees that the woman is being killed by her monstrous breakfasts: the husband knows, as everybody knows, that as good work can be done, and as long lives lived, on the diet of the saints and the cranks as on that of the men about town. Probably he reads my articles, and

finds them as vigorous as those of my carnivorous colleagues. The sensible solution is obvious enough. It is the doctor's business to go to the patient and say, "My good lady: do you wish to remain a vegetarian or not? If you do, I must cut you down from your present allowance of forage enough at every meal to feed six dragoons and their horses for a day, to something that you can manage and relish. If not, I can settle the difficulty at once by simply sending you back to cutlets, in which your experience will prevent you from overeating yourself." But alas! doctors seldom do know their business. This particular doctor and his client do not get beyond the Pickwickian position: — "'Crumpets is wholesome, sir,' says the patient. 'Crumpets is *not* wholesome, sir,' says the doctor, wery fierce." When the dramatist takes sides in such a wrangle he is lost. His drama, beginning in excellent realistic comedy, and making fair way with the audience on that plane, ends in pathos and folly. The doctor, to rescue the lady from her cucumber pie, proposes an elopement. She consents. The husband comes back just in time to save her from ruin and disgrace. But he brings back with him hominy porridge, surfeit, and death. Feeling the delicacy of the situation, he considerately drops dead there and then. The doctor, wrong to the last, diagnoses heart disease; but the audience quite understands that he perishes simply because there must be a happy ending to all plays, even anti-vegetarian ones.

There is some unintentional comedy in the casting of the piece as well as in the drama itself. The fanatic has a female accomplice who is also a Spartan abstainer, and who should therefore, if the doctor's views are to be made good, be on the verge of starvation.

This lady is impersonated by Miss Kate Phillips. Now Miss Phillips stands out in this inept generation as an exceptionally accomplished and expert actress; but the one thing she cannot do is to look as if she were dying of starvation. Her plump contours do not curve that way, and her inspiriting vital energy irresistibly suggests that her diet, whatever it is, is probably the right diet for persons in quest of stamina. She gives the dramatist's didactic position away with every line of her figure and every point in her speeches, presenting Matilda Maudsley as a good platform speaker and capable agitator; getting what comedy there is to be got out of the part; and altogether declining to give the audience the mean satisfaction of seeing a clever woman made uncomely and ridiculous. The doctor, on the other hand, is presented by Mr. J. G. Grahame as a well-meaning, well-dressed creature with a sympathetic "bedside manner" and a cheerfully common brain, in whose wake one can see rows of graves smelling of all the drugs in the pharmacopœia. Miss Fordyce cannot make the wife otherwise than silly, her part being written that way. One would unhesitatingly back her fanatical husband's opinion against hers, in spite of the elaborately pasty complexion with which Mr. Gurney endows him. On the whole, Mr. Day, without quite intending it, has given better parts to the fanatics than to the orthodox cutlet-eaters; and as Mr. Gurney and Miss Phillips make the most of them, the total effect produced is against both the bowl and the butcher.

The only other persons of any importance in the piece are the fanatic's backsliding son, pleasantly played by Mr. Charles Troode, and a sympathetic secretary of the Taffy order, as whom Mr. Nye Chart,

notwithstanding a weakness for imitating some of the comedy methods of Mr. John Drew, makes something of a not too interesting part.

I approach the subject of the St. James's play with much reluctance. Mr. Carton's plays are so extremely good-natured that they disarm criticism. But there is a point at which good-nature rouses malice; and that point is reached and overstepped in "The Tree of Knowledge." It is to me an unbearable play. Its staleness is not to be described: the situations are expected and inevitable to such a degree of obviousness that even when Mr. Alexander remonstrates with Miss Julia Neilson in the manner of Bill Sikes with Nancy, and all but strangles her in full view of the audience, the effect is that of a platitude. Not for a moment is it possible to see anybody in the figures on the stage but Mr. Alexander, Mr. Vernon, Mr. Terry, Mr. Esmond, Miss Fay Davis, Miss Neilson, and Miss Addison. There are five mortal acts; and there is not a moment of illusion in them. All that can be said in its favor is that Mr. H. B. Irving, fresh from the unnatural occupation of tearing the romantic trappings off his father's favorite heroes in the magazines, did contrive, in a cynical part of the old Byron-Montague type, to throw a glamor of the genuine ante-Shakespearean-Irving kind over a few of his scenes, and scored the only personal success of the evening; and that Mr. George Sheldon, as the bad character of the village, also left us with some sense of having made a new acquaintance. But the rest was nothing but a new jug of hot water on very old tea leaves. Acting under such circumstances is not possible. Mr. Esmond went back to the old business, brought in by Mr. Hare in the 'sixties, of the young man made up as an old

one. The make-up seemed to me as unreal as the part; and I venture to suggest to Mr. Esmond that if he keeps on doing this sort of thing he will find some day, that the pretence has become a reality, and will regret that he wasted his prime on sham caducity when there were young parts going. Mr. Alexander, having a great deal to do and no discoverable scrap of character in his part, desperately burlesqued his own mannerisms: a policy in which he was outdone by Miss Julia Neilson, who, as a second Mrs. Tanqueray — a sort of person whom Mr. Carton understands less, if possible, than Mr. Pinero, and whom Miss Neilson does not understand at all — gave us an assortment of all the best known passages in modern acting, not excepting her own, and including, for the first time, Miss Achurch's frozen stare from the last act of "A Doll's House." I do not blame either Mr. Alexander or Miss Neilson: they had to fill in their parts somehow; but the spectacle was an extremely trying one for all parties. Mr. Fred Terry was more fortunate. After struggling manfully for many years with the family propensity to act, he has of late succumbed to it, and now bears up against Mr. Carton almost as cheerfully as Miss Ellen Terry bears up against Shakespeare. Miss Fay Davis, Mr. Vernon, and Miss Carlotta Addison, having nothing to do but illustrate the author's amiability, did it with all possible amenity and expertness: indeed, but for the soothing effect of Miss Davis's charm, I should have gone out at the end of the fourth act and publicly slain myself as a protest against so insufferable an entertainment.

I should perhaps state my objections to "The Tree of Knowledge" more clearly and precisely; but how can I, with my mind unhinged by sitting out those five

acts? My feelings towards Mr. Carton's plays is generally almost reprehensibly indulgent; for his humor is excellent; his imagination is genial and of the true storytelling brand; he is apt and clear as a man of letters; and his sympathies are kindly and free from all affectation and snobbery. But he seems to have no dramatic conscience, no respect for the realities of life, and, except in his humor, no originality whatever. The quantity of very bad early Dickens, of the Cheeryble-Linkinwater sort, which he pours out, is beyond endurance. One should begin where Dickens left off, not where he started. All this throwing back to Pickwick, and to the theatre of Byron and Robertson, for some sort of fanciful decoration for a hackneyed plot, is bad enough when there is at least some quaint pretence of character, like that of the old bookseller in "Liberty Hall." But when there is no such pretence; when the thing is spun out to five acts; and when the fifth act consists largely of the novice's blunder of making one of the characters describe what passed in the fourth, then even the most patient critic cannot repress a groan.

By the way, if Mr. Alexander is going to make a specialty of plays, lasting from three to four hours, may I suggest that he should get his upholstery and curtains dyed green, or some more restful color than the present crimson? I believe my irresistible impulse to rush at "The Tree of Knowledge" and gore and trample it is chiefly due to the effect of all that red drapery on me.

CHIN CHON CHINO

The Cat and the Cherub. By Chester Bailey Fernald. Lyric Theatre, 30 October, 1897.
The First Born. By Francis Powers. Globe Theatre, 1 November, 1897.

THE latest attempt to escape from hackneydom and cockneydom is the Chinatown play, imported, of course, from America. There is no reason, however, why it should not be manufactured in England. I beg respectfully to inform managers and syndicates that I am prepared to supply "Chinese plays," music and all, on reasonable terms, at the shortest notice. A form of art which makes a merit of crudity need never lack practitioners in this country. The Chinese music, which we are spared at the Lyric, is unmitigated humbug. At the Globe it is simply very bad American music, with marrowbones and cleaver, teatray and catcall, *ad lib.* And the play is nothing but Wilkie Collins fiction disguised in pigtail and petticoats.

The result is worth analyzing. The dramatic art of our day has come to such a pass of open artificiality and stale romantic convention that the sudden repudiation of an art produces for the moment almost as refreshing a sensation as its revival would. In "The First Born" the death of the little boy at the end of the first scene, and the murder of the man whose corpse is propped up against the doorpost by his murderer and made to counterfeit life whilst the policeman passes, might be improvised in a schoolroom: yet they induce a thrill which all of the resources of the St. James's

Theatre, strained during five long acts to their utmost, cannot attain to for the briefest instant. Truly the secret of wisdom is to become as a little child again. But our art-loving authors will not learn the lesson. They cannot understand that when a great genius lays hands on a form of art and fascinates all who understand its language with it, he makes it say all that it can say, and leaves it exhausted. When Bach has got the last word out of the fugue, Mozart out of the opera, Beethoven out of the symphony, Wagner out of the symphonic drama, their enraptured admirers exclaim: "Our masters have shown us the way: let us compose some more fugues, operas, symphonies and Bayreuth dramas." Through just the same error the men who have turned dramatists on the frivolous ground of their love for the theatre have plagued a weary world with Shakespearean dramas in five acts and in blank verse, with artificial comedies after Congreve and Sheridan, and with the romantic goody-goody fiction which was squeezed dry by a hundred strong hands in the first half of this century. It is only when we are dissatisfied with existing masterpieces that we create new ones: if we merely worship them, we only try to repeat the exploit of their creator by picking out the tidbits and stringing them together, in some feeble fashion of our own, into a "new and original" botching of what our master left a good and finished job. We are encouraged in our folly by the need of the multitude for intermediaries between its childishness and the maturity of the mighty men of art, and also by the fact that art fecundated by itself gains a certain lapdog refinement, very acceptable to lovers of lapdogs. The Incas of Peru cultivated their royal race in this way, each Inca marrying his sister.

The result was that an average Inca was worth about as much as an average fashionable drama bred carefully from the last pair of fashionable dramas, themselves bred in the same way, with perhaps a cross of novel. But vital art work comes always from a cross between art and life: art being of one sex only, and quite sterile by itself. Such a cross is always possible; for though the artist may not have the capacity to bring his art into contact with the higher life of his time, fermenting in its religion, its philosophy, its science, and its statesmanship (perhaps, indeed, there may not be any statesmanship going), he can at least bring it into contact with the obvious life and common passions of the streets. This is what has happened in the case of the Chinatown play. The dramatist, compelled by the nature of his enterprise to turn his back on the fashionable models for "brilliantly" cast plays, and to go in search of documents and facts in order to put a slice of Californian life on the stage with crude realism, instantly wakes the theatre up with a piece which has some reality in it, though its mother is the cheapest and most conventional of the daughters of art, and its father the lowest and darkest stratum of Americanized yellow civilization. The phenomenon is a very old one. When art becomes effete, it is realism that comes to the rescue. In the same way, when ladies and gentlemen become effete, prostitutes become prime ministers; mobs make revolutions; and matters are readjusted by men who do not know their own grandfathers.

This moral of the advent of the Chinatown play is brought out strikingly by the contrast between the rival versions at the Lyric and at the Globe. The Lyric version, entitled "The Cat and the Cherub," and claiming to be the original (a claim which is apparently

not contradicted), is much the more academic of the two. It is a formal play, with comparatively pretentious acting parts, and the local color blended into the dramatic business in the most approved literary manner: the whole ending with a complicated death struggle, in which the victim is strangled with his own pigtail, and performs an elaborate stage fall. In the Globe version there is comparatively no art at all: we see the affair as we see a street row, with all the incidents of the Chinatown slum going on independently — vulgar, busy, incongruous, irrelevant, indifferent, just as we see them in a London slum whilst the policeman is adjusting some tragedy at the corner. Placed between an academic play and a vulgar play, the high-class London critic cannot hesitate. He waves the Globe aside with scorn and takes the Lyric to his bosom. It seems to me that the popular verdict must go the other way. It is of course eminently possible that people may not care to pay West End theatre prices for a very short entertainment which, at best, would make an excellent side show at Earl's Court. But if they choose either way, they will probably like the crude, coarse, curious, vivid, and once or twice even thrilling hotch-potch at the Globe, better than the more sedate and academic drama at the Lyric. A good deal will depend on which they see first. Nine-tenths of the charm of Chinatown lies in its novelty; and a comparison of the opinions of those who saw the two plays in the order of their production, and those who, like myself, saw the Globe play first, will prove, I think, that the first experience very heavily discounts the second.

Up to a late hour on Monday night I persuaded myself that I would hasten from the Globe to Her Majesty's, and do my stern duty by "Katherine and

Petruchio." But when it came to the point I sacrificed duty to personal considerations. "The Taming of the Shrew" is a remarkable example of Shakespeare's repeated attempts to make the public accept realistic comedy. Petruchio is worth fifty Orlandos as a human study. The preliminary scenes in which he shows his character by pricking up his ears at the news that there is a fortune to be got by any man who will take an ugly and ill-tempered woman off her father's hands, and hurrying off to strike the bargain before somebody else picks it up, are not romantic; but they give an honest and masterly picture of a real man, whose like we have all met. The actual taming of the woman by the methods used in taming wild beasts belongs to his determination to make himself rich and comfortable, and his perfect freedom from all delicacy in using his strength and opportunities for that purpose. The process is quite bearable, because the selfishness of the man is healthily good-humored and untainted by wanton cruelty; and it is good for the shrew to encounter a force like that and be brought to her senses. Unfortunately, Shakespeare's own immaturity, as well as the immaturity of the art he was experimenting in, made it impossible for him to keep the play on the realistic plane to the end; and the last scene is altogether disgusting to modern sensibility. No man with any decency of feeling can sit it out in the company of a woman without feeling extremely ashamed of the lord-of-creation moral implied in the wager and the speech put into the woman's own mouth. Therefore the play, though still worthy of a complete and efficient representation, would need, even at that, some apology. But the Garrick version of it, as a farcical afterpiece! — thank you: no.

SHAKESPEARE AND MR. BARRIE

The Tempest. Performance by the Elizabethan Stage Society at the Mansion House, 5 November, 1897.
The Little Minister: a play in four acts. By J. M. Barrie, founded on his novel of that name. Haymarket Theatre, 6 November, 1897.

IT was a curious experience to see "The Tempest" one night and "The Little Minister" the next. I should like to have taken Shakespeare to the Haymarket play. How well he would have recognized it! For he also once had to take a popular novel; make a shallow, unnatural, indulgent, pleasant, popular drama of it; and hand it to the theatre with no hint of his feelings except the significant title "As You Like It." And we have not even the wit to feel the snub, but go on complacently talking of the manufacture of Rosalinds and Orlandos (a sort of thing that ought really to be done in a jam factory) as "delineation of character" and the like. One feels Shakespeare's position most strongly in the plays written after he had outgrown his interest in the art of acting and given up the idea of educating the public. In "Hamlet" he is quite enthusiastic about naturalness in the business of the stage, and makes Hamlet hold forth about it quite Wagnerianly: in "Cymbeline" and "The Tempest" he troubles himself so little about it that he actually writes down the exasperating clownish interruptions he once denounced; brings on the god in the car; and, having indulged the public in matters which he no longer set any store by, took it out of them in poetry.

The poetry of "The Tempest" is so magical that it would make the scenery of a modern theatre ridiculous. The methods of the Elizabethan Stage Society (I do not commit myself to their identity with those of the Elizabethan stage) leave to the poet the work of conjuring up the isle "full of noises, sounds and sweet airs." And I do not see how this plan can be beaten. If Sir Henry Irving were to put the play on at the Lyceum next season (why not, by the way?), what could he do but multiply the expenditure enormously and spoil the illusion? He would give us the screaming violin instead of the harmonious viol; "characteristic" music scored for wood-wind and percussion by Mr. German instead of Mr. Dolmetsch's pipe and tabor; an expensive and absurd stage ship; and some windless, airless, changeless, soundless, electric-lit, wooden-floored mockeries of the haunts of Ariel. They would cost more; but would they be an improvement on the Mansion House arrangement? Mr. Poel says frankly, "See that singers' gallery up there! Well, let 's pretend that it 's the ship." We agree; and the thing is done. But how could we agree to such a pretence with a stage ship? Before it we should say, "Take that thing away: if our imagination is to create a ship, it must not be contradicted by something that apes a ship so vilely as to fill us with denial and repudiation of its imposture. The singing gallery makes no attempt to impose on us: it disarms criticism by unaffected submission to the facts of the case, and throws itself honestly on our fancy, with instant success. In the same way a rag doll is fondly nursed by a child who can only stare at a waxen simulacrum of infancy. A superstitious person left to himself will see a ghost in every ray of moonlight on the wall and

every old coat hanging on a nail; but make up a really careful, elaborate, plausible, picturesque, blood-curdling ghost for him, and his cunning grin will proclaim that he sees through it at a glance. The reason is, not that a man can *always* imagine things more vividly than art can present them to him, but that it takes an altogether extraordinary degree of art to compete with the pictures which the imagination makes when it is stimulated by such potent forces as the maternal instinct, superstitious awe, or the poetry of Shakespeare. The dialogue between Gonzalo and that "bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog" the boatswain, would turn the House of Lords into a ship: in less than ten words — "What care these roarers for the name of king?" — you see the white horses and the billowing green mountains playing football with crown and purple. But the Elizabethan method would not do for a play like "The White Heather," excellent as it is of its kind. If Mr. Poel, on the strength of the Drury Lane dialogue, were to leave us to imagine the singers' gallery to be the bicycling ring in Battersea Park, or Boulter's Lock, we should flatly decline to imagine anything at all. It requires the nicest judgment to know exactly how much help the imagination wants. There is no general rule, not even for any particular author. You can do best without scenery in "The Tempest" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," because the best scenery you can get will only destroy the illusion created by the poetry; but it does not at all follow that scenery will not improve a representation of "Othello." Maeterlinck's plays, requiring a mystical inscenation in the style of Fernand Knopf, would be nearly as much spoiled by Elizabethan treatment as by Drury Lane treatment. Modern melodrama is so de-

pendent on the most realistic scenery that a representation would suffer far more by the omission of the scenery than of the dialogue. This is why the manager who stages every play in the same way is a bad manager, even when he is an adept at his one way. A great deal of the distinction of the Lyceum productions is due to the fact that Sir Henry Irving, when the work in hand is at all within the limits of his sympathies, knows exactly how far to go in the matter of scenery. When he makes mistakes, they are almost always mistakes in stage management, by which he sacrifices the effect of some unappreciated passage of dialogue of which the charm has escaped him.

Though I was sufficiently close to the stage at "The Tempest" to hear, or imagine I heard, every word of the dialogue, yet it was plain that the actors were not eminent after-dinner speakers, and had consequently never received in that room the customary warning to speak to the second pillar on the right of the door, on pain of not being heard. Though they all spoke creditably, and some of them remarkably well, they took matters rather too easily, with the result that the quieter passages were inaudible to a considerable number of spectators. I mention the matter because the Elizabethan Stage Society is hardly yet alive to the acoustic difficulties raised by the lofty halls it performs in. They are mostly troublesome places for a speaker; for if he shouts, his vowels make such a roaring din that his consonants are indistinguishable; and if he does not, his voice does not travel far enough. They are too resonant for noisy speakers and too vast for gentle ones. A clean, athletic articulation, kept up without any sentimental or indolent relaxations, is indispensable as a primary physical accomplishment

for the Elizabethan actor who "takes to the halls."

The performance went without a hitch. Mr. Dolmetsch looked after the music; and the costumes were worthy of the reputation which the Society has made for itself in this particular. Ariel, armless and winged in his first incarnation, was not exactly a tricksy sprite; for as the wing arrangement acted as a strait waistcoat, he had to be content with the effect he made as a living picture. This disability on his part was characteristic of the whole performance, which had to be taken in a somewhat low key and slow tempo, with a minimum of movement. If any attempt had been made at the impetuosity and liveliness for which the English experts of the sixteenth century were famous throughout Europe, it would have not only failed, but prevented the performers from attaining what they did attain, very creditably, by a more modest ambition.

To our host the Lord Mayor I take off my hat. When I think of the guzzling horrors I have seen in that room, and the insufferable oratory that has passed through my head from ear to ear on its way to the second pillar on the right of the door (which has the advantage of being stone deaf), I hail with sincere gratitude the first tenant of the Mansion House who has bidden me to an entertainment worthy of the first magistrate of a great city, instead of handing me over to an army of waiters to be dealt with as one "whose god is his belly."

"The Little Minister" is a much happier play than "The Tempest." Mr. Barrie has no impulse to throw his adaptation of a popular novel at the public head with a sarcastic title, because he has written the novel himself, and thoroughly enjoys it. Mr. Barrie

is a born storyteller; and he sees no further than his stories — conceives any discrepancy between them and the world as a shortcoming on the world's part, and is only too happy to be able to rearrange matters in a pleasanter way. The popular stage, which was a prison to Shakespeare's genius, is a playground to Mr. Barrie's. At all events he does the thing as if he liked it, and does it very well. He has apparently no eye for human character; but he has a keen sense of human qualities, and he produces highly popular assortments of them. He cheerfully assumes, as the public wish him to assume, that one endearing quality implies all endearing qualities, and one repulsive quality all repulsive qualities: the exceptions being comic characters, who are permitted to have "weaknesses," or stern and terrible souls who are at once understood to be saving up some enormous sentimentality for the end of the last act but one. Now if there is one lesson that real life teaches us more insistently than another, it is that we must not infer one quality from another, or even rely on the constancy of ascertained qualities under all circumstances. It is not only that a brave and good-humored man may be vain and fond of money; a lovable woman greedy, sensual and mendacious; a saint vindictive; and a thief kindly; but these very terms are made untrustworthy by the facts that the man who is brave enough to venture on personal combat with a prizefighter or a tiger may be abjectly afraid of ghosts, mice, women, a dentist's forceps, public opinion, cholera epidemics, and a dozen other things that many timorous mortals face resignedly enough; the man who is stingy to miserliness with coin, and is the despair of waiters and cabmen, gives thousands (by cheque) to public institutions; the man who eats oysters

by the hundred and legs of mutton by the dozen for wagers, is in many matters temperate, moderate, and even abstemious; and men and women alike, though they behave with the strictest conventional propriety when tempted by advances from people whom they do not happen to like, are by no means so austere with people whom they do like. In romance, all these " inconsistencies " are corrected by replacing human nature by conventional assortments of qualities. When Shakespeare objected to this regulation, and wrote " All 's Well " in defiance of it, his play was not acted. When he succumbed, and gave us the required assortment " as we like it," he was enormously successful. Mr. Barrie has no scruples about complying. He is one with the public in the matter, and makes a pretty character as a milliner makes a pretty bonnet, by " matching " the materials. And why not, if everybody is pleased?

To that question I reply by indignantly refusing, as a contemporary of Master-Builder Solness, to be done out of my allowance of " salutary self-torture." People don't go to the theatre to be pleased: there are a hundred cheaper, less troublesome, more effective pleasures than an uncomfortable gallery can offer. We are led there by our appetite for drama, which is no more to be satisfied by sweetmeats than our appetite for dinner is to be satisfied with meringues and raspberry vinegar. One likes something solid; and that, I suppose, is why heroes and heroines with assorted qualities are only endurable when the author has sufficient tact and comic force to keep up an affectionate undercurrent of fun at their expense and his own. That was how Shakespeare pulled his amiable fictions through; that is how Mr. Carton does it; that is how

Mr. Barrie does it. Dickens, with his fundamental seriousness and social conscience always at war with his romantic instincts and idealism, and even with his unconquerable sense of humor, made desperate efforts to take his assorted heroines quite seriously by resolutely turning off the fun, with a result — Agnes Wickfield, Esther Summerson and so forth — so utterly unbearable that they stand as a warning to all authors that it is dangerous to be serious unless you have something real to be serious about, even when you are a great genius. Happily, Mr. Barrie is not serious about his little minister and his little minister's Babby. At most he is affectionate, which is quite a different thing, The twain are nine-tenths fun and the other tenth sentiment, which makes a very toothsome combination.

I should explain, however, that I took care not to read the novel before seeing the play; and I have not had time to read it since. But it is now clear to me that Mr. Barrie has depended on the novel to make his hero and heroine known to the playgoer. Their parts consist of a string of amusing and sometimes touching trivialities; but it is easy to divine that the young minister's influence over his elders, and perhaps Babby's attraction for him, are more fully accounted for in the book. I should hope also that Rob Dow and the chief elder, who in the play are machine-made after a worn-out pattern, are more original and natural in the novel. Otherwise, I found the play self-sufficing.

As a success for the Haymarket Theatre the play has fulfilled and exceeded all expectation. It has every prospect of running into the next century. It is the first play produced under Mr. Cyril Maude's own management that has given him a chance as an actor. It is quite characteristic of the idiotic topsyturviness of

our stage that Mr. Maude, who has a remarkable charm of quaintly naïve youthfulness, should have been immediately pitched upon — nay, have pitched on himself — as a born impersonator of old men. All he asked from the author was a snuff-box, a set of grease paints, and a part not younger than sixty-five to make him perfectly happy. There was Mr. Grundy's "Sowing the Wind," for instance: Mr. Maude was never more pleased with himself than when, after spending the afternoon in pencilling impossible wrinkles all over his face, he was crustily taking snuff as the old man in that play. The spectacle used to exasperate me to such a degree that nothing restrained me from hurling the nearest opera-glass at those wrinkles but the fear that, as I am unfortunately an incorrigibly bad shot, I might lay Miss Emery low, or maim Mr. Brandon Thomas for life. I do declare that of all infuriating absurdities that human perversity has evolved, this painted-on "character-acting" is the only one that entirely justifies manslaughter. It was not that Mr. Cyril Maude did it badly; on the contrary, he did it very cleverly indeed: it was that he ought to have been doing something else. The plague of the stage at present is the intolerable stereotyping of the lover: he is always the same sort of young man, with the same cast of features, the same crease down his new trousers, the same careful manners, the same air of behaving and dressing like a gentleman for the first time in his life and being overcome with the novelty and importance of it. Mr. Maude was just the man to break this oppressive fashion; and instead of doing it, he amused himself with snuff, and crustiness, and wrinkles as aforesaid, perhaps for the sake of the novelty which gentility could not offer him. As the little

minister he at last plays without disguise, and with complete success. He is naturally shy at showing himself to the public for the first time; but the shyness becomes him in the part; and I dare say he will run Mr. Forbes Robertson hard for the rest of the season as a much-admired man. Miss Winifred Emery, as Babby, has a rare time of it. She plays with the part like a child, and amuses herself and the audience unboundedly. Her sudden assumption of Red-Robe dignity for a few minutes in the fourth act constitutes what I think may be described safely as the worst bit of acting the world has yet seen from a performer of equal reputation, considering that it is supposed to represent the conduct of a girl just out of the schoolroom; but she soon relapses into an abandonment to fun compared to which Miss Rehan's most reckless attacks of that nature are sedate. Mr. Kinghorne is, I think, the best of the elders; but Mr. Brandon Thomas and Mrs. Brooke are in great force. There was a good deal of curiosity among the women in the audience to see Mr. Barrie, because of his evident belief that he was showing a deep insight into feminine character by representing Babby as a woman whose deepest instinct was to find a man for her master. At the end, when her husband announced his intention of caning her if she deserved it, she flung her arms round his neck and exclaimed ecstatically that he was the man for her. The inference that, with such an experience of the sex, Mr. Barrie's personality must be little short of godlike, led to a vociferous call for him when the curtain fell. In response, Mr. Harrison appeared, and got as far as "Mr. Barrie is far too modest a man —" when he was interrupted by a wild shriek of laughter. I do not doubt that many amiable ladies may from

time to time be afflicted with the fancy that there is something voluptuous in getting thrashed by a man. In the classes where the majority of married women get that fancy gratified with excessive liberality, it is not so persistent as Mr. Barrie might think. I seriously suggest to him that the samples of his notion of "womanliness" given by Babby are nothing but silly travesties of that desire to find an entirely trustworthy leader which is common to men and women.

Sir A. C. Mackenzie's overture was drowned by the conversation, which was energetically led by the composer and Sir George Lewis. But I caught some scraps of refreshingly workmanlike polyphony; and the *melodrame* at the beginning of the garden scene was charming.

ON PLEASURE BENT

20 November, 1897.

UP to a certain point, I have never flinched from martyrdom. By far the heaviest demand ever made upon me by the public weal is that which nearly three years ago devoted my nights to the theatres and my days to writing about them. If I had known how exceedingly trying the experience would be, I am not sure that I should not have seen the public weal further before making this supreme sacrifice to it. But I had been so seldom to the theatre in the previous years that I did not realize its horrors. I firmly believe that the trials upon which I then entered have injured my brain. At all events matters reached a crisis after the critical activities of last week. I felt

that I must have a real experience of some kind, under conditions, especially as regards fresh air, as unlike those of the stalls as possible. After some consideration it occurred to me that if I went into the country, selected a dangerous hill, and rode down it on a bicycle at full speed in the darkest part of the night, some novel and convincing piece of realism might result. It did.

Probably no man has ever misunderstood another so completely as the doctor misunderstood me when he apologized for the sensation produced by the point of his needle as he corrected the excessive openness of my countenance after the adventure. To him who has endured points made by actors for nearly three years, the point of a surgeon's darning needle comes as a delicious relief. I did not like to ask him to put in a few more stitches merely to amuse me, as I had already, through pure self-indulgence, cut into his Sunday rest to an extent of which his kindness made me ashamed; but I doubt if I shall ever see a play again without longing for the comparative luxury of that quiet country surgery, with the stillness without broken only by the distant song and throbbing drumbeat of some remote Salvation Army corps, and the needle, with its delicate realism, touching my sensibilities, stitch, stitch, stitch, with absolute sincerity in the hands of an artist who had actually learned his business and knew how to do it.

To complete the comparison it would be necessary to go into economics of it by measuring the doctor's fee against the price of a stall in a West End theatre. But here I am baffled by the fact that the highest art revolts from an equation between its infinite value and a finite pile of coin. It so happened that my voice,

which is an Irish voice, won for me the sympathy of the doctor. This circumstance must appear amazing almost beyond credibility in the light of the fact that he was himself an Irishman; but so it was. He rightly felt that sympathy is beyond price, and declined to make it the subject of a commercial transaction. Thereby he made it impossible for me to mention his name without black ingratitude; for I know no more effectual way of ruining a man in this country than by making public the smallest propensity on his part to adopt a benevolent attitude towards necessitous strangers. Here the West End manager will perhaps whisper reproachfully, "Well; and do *I* ever make you pay for your stall?" To which I cannot but reply, "Is that also due to the sympathy my voice awakens in you when it is raised every Saturday?" I trust I am not ungrateful for my invitations; but to expect me to feel towards the manager who lacerates my nerves, enfeebles my mind, and destroys my character, as I did towards the physician who healed my body, refreshed my soul, and flattered my vocal accomplishments when I was no more to him than an untimely stranger with an unheard-of black eye, is to dethrone justice and repudiate salvation. Besides, he said it was a mercy I was not killed. Would any manager have been of that opinion?

Perhaps the most delightful thing about this village was that its sense of the relative importance of things was so rightly adjusted that it had no theatrical gossip; for this doctor actually did not know who I was. With a cynicism for which his charity afterwards made me blush, I sought to reassure him as to the pecuniary competence of his muddy, torn, ensanguined and facially spoiled visitor by saying "My name is G. B. S.,"

as who should say "My name is Cecil Rhodes, or Henry Irving, or William of Germany." Without turning a hair, he sweetly humored my egotistic garrulity by replying, in perfect lightness of heart, "Mine 's F——: *what are you?*" Breathing at last an atmosphere in which it mattered so little who and what G. B. S. was, that nobody knew either one or the other, I almost sobbed with relief whilst he threaded his needle with a nice white horsehair, tactfully pretending to listen to my evasive murmur that I was a "sort of writer," an explanation meant to convey to him that I earned a blameless living by inscribing names in letters of gold over shop windows and on perforated wire blinds. To have brought the taint of my factitious little vogue into the unperverted consciousness of his benevolent and sensible life would have been the act of a serpent.

On the whole, the success of my experiment left nothing to be desired; and I recommend it confidently for imitation. My nerves completely recovered their tone and my temper its natural sweetness. I have been peaceful, happy and affectionate ever since, to a degree which amazes my associates. It is true that my appearance leaves something to be desired; but I believe that when my eye becomes again visible, the softness of its expression will more than compensate for the surrounding devastation.

However, a man is something more than an omelette; and no extremity of battery can tame my spirit to the point of submitting to the sophistry by which Mr. Beerbohm Tree has attempted to shift the guilt of "Katherine and Petruchio" from his shoulders and Garrick's to those of Shakespeare. I have never hesitated to give our immortal William as much of what he deserves as

is possible considering how far his enormities transcend my powers of invective; but even William is entitled to fair play. Mr. Tree contends that as Shakespeare wrote the scenes which Garrick tore away from their context, they form a genuine Shakespearean play; and he outdares even this audacity by further contending that since the play was performed for the entertainment of Christopher Sly the tinker, the more it is debauched the more appropriate it is. This line of argument is so breath-bereaving that I can but gasp out an inquiry as to what Mr. Tree understands by the one really eloquent and heartfelt line uttered by Sly: — " 'T is a very excellent piece of work: would 't were done! "

This stroke, to which the whole Sly interlude is but as the handle to the dagger, appears to me to reduce Mr. Tree's identification of the tastes of his audiences at Her Majesty's with those of a drunken tinker to a condition distinctly inferior to that of my left eye at present. The other argument is more seriously meant, and may even impose upon the simplicity of the Cockney playgoer. Let us test its principle by varying its application. Certain anti-Christian propagandists, both here and in America, have extracted from the Bible all those passages which are unsuited for family reading, and have presented a string of them to the public as a representative sample of Holy Writ. Some of our orthodox writers, though intensely indignant at this controversial ruse, have nevertheless not scrupled to do virtually the same thing with the Koran. Will Mr. Tree claim for these collections the full authority, dignity, and inspiration of the authors from whom they are culled? If not, how does he distinguish Garrick's procedure from theirs? Garrick took from a play of Shakespeare's all the passages which served his baser

purpose, and suppressed the rest. Had his object been to discredit Shakespeare in the honest belief that Shakespearolatry was a damnable error, we might have respected "Katherine and Petruchio" even whilst deploring it. But he had no such conviction: in fact, he was a professed Shakespearolator, and no doubt a sincere one, as far as his wretched powers of appreciation went. He debased "The Taming of the Shrew" solely to make money out of the vulgarity of the taste of his time. Such a transaction can be defended on commercial grounds: to defend it on any other seems to me to be either an artistic misdemeanor or a profession of Philistinism. If Mr. Tree were to declare boldly that he thinks "Katherine and Petruchio" a better play than "The Taming of the Shrew," and that Garrick, as an actor-manager, knew his business better than a mere poet, he would be within his rights. He would not even strain our credulity; for a long dynasty of actor-managers, from Cibber to Sir Henry Irving, have been unquestionably sincere in preferring their own acting versions to the unmutilated masterpieces of the genius on whom they have lavished lip-honor. But Mr. Tree pretends to no such preference: on the contrary, he openly stigmatizes the Garrick version as tinker's fare, and throws the responsibility on Shakespeare because the materials were stolen from him.

I do not wish to pose academically at Mr. Tree. My object is a practical one: I want to intimidate him into a thorough mistrust of his own judgment where Shakespeare is concerned. He is about to produce one of Shakespeare's great plays, "Julius Cæsar"; and he is just as likely as not to cut it to ribbons. The man who would revive "Katherine and Petruchio" at this time of day would do anything un-Shakespearean. I

do not blame him for this: it is a perfectly natural consequence of the fact that, like most actors and managers, he does not like Shakespeare and does not know him, although he conforms without conscious insincerity to the convention as to the Swan's greatness. I am far from setting up my own Shakespearean partialities and intimacies, acquired in my childhood, as in any way superior to Mr. Tree's mature distaste or indifference. But I may reasonably assume — though I admit that the assumption is unusual and indeed unprecedented — that Shakespeare's plays are produced for the satisfaction of those who like Shakespeare, and not as a tedious rite to celebrate the reputation of the author and enhance that of the actor. Therefore I hope Mr. Tree, in such cutting of "Julius Cæsar" as the limits of time may force upon him, will carefully retain all the passages which he dislikes and cut out those which seem to him sufficiently popular to meet the views of Christopher Sly. He will not, in any case, produce an acting version as good as Mr. Forbes Robertson's "Hamlet," because Mr. Forbes Robertson seems to have liked "Hamlet"; nor as good as Mr. George Alexander's "As You Like It," because Mr. Alexander apparently considers Shakespeare as good a judge of a play as himself; but we shall at least escape a positively anti-Shakespearean "Julius Cæsar." If Mr. Tree had suffered as much as I have from seeing Shakespeare butchered to make a cockney's holiday, he would sympathize with my nervousness on the subject.

As I write — or rather as I dictate — comes the remarkable news that the London managers have presented the Vice-Chamberlain with 500 ounces of silver. One cannot but be refreshed by the frank publicity of the proceeding. When the builders in my parish proffer

ounces of silver to the sanitary inspector, they do so by stealth, and blush to find it fame. But the Vice-Chamberlain, it appears, may take presents from those over whom he is set as an inspector and judge without a breath of scandal. It seems to me, however, that the transaction involves a grave injustice to Mr. Redford. Why is he to have nothing? A well-known Irish landlord once replied to a threatening letter by saying, "If you expect to intimidate me by shooting my agent, you will be disappointed." One can imagine Mr. Redford saying to the managers in a similar spirit, "If you expect to bribe me by presenting 500 ounces of silver to my vice-principal, you will be disappointed." I do not suppose that Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane has dreamt of giving any serious thought to this aspect of what I shall permit myself to describe as a ludicrously improper proceeding; for the Censorial functions of his department will not bear serious thought. His action is certainly according to precedent. Sir Henry Herbert, who, as Master of the Revels to Charles I, did much to establish the traditions of the Censorship, has left us his grateful testimony to the civility of a contemporary actor-manager who tactfully presented his wife with a handsome pair of gloves. Still, that actor-manager did not invite the Press to report the speech he made on the occasion, nor did he bring a large public deputation of his brother managers with him. I suggest that his example in this respect should be followed in future rather than that of Tuesday last. I shall be told, no doubt, that Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane has nothing to do with the licensing of plays. And I shall immediately retort, "What then have the London managers to do with Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane?"

A BREATH FROM THE SPANISH MAIN

A Man's Shadow. Adapted from the French play "Roger la Honte" by Robert Buchanan. Revival. Her Majesty's Theatre, 27 November, 1897.
Admiral Guinea: a play in four acts. By R. L. Stevenson and W. E. Henley. *Honesty: a Cottage Flower:* in one act. By Margaret Young. The New Century Theatre. Avenue Theatre, 29 November, 1897.

IT is not in human nature to regard Her Majesty's Theatre as the proper place for such a police-court drama as "A Man's Shadow." Still, it is not a bad bit of work of its kind; and it would be a good deal better if it were played as it ought to be with two actors instead of one in the parts of Lucien Laroque and Luversan. Of course Mr. Tree, following the precedent of "The Lyons Mail," doubles the twain. Equally of course, this expedient completely destroys the illusion, which requires that two different men should resemble one another so strongly as to be practically indistinguishable except on tolerably close scrutiny; whilst Mr. Tree's reputation as a master of the art of disguising himself requires that he shall astonish the audience by the extravagant dissimilarity of the two figures he alternately presents. No human being could, under any conceivable circumstances, mistake his Laroque for his Luversan; and I have no doubt that Mr. Tree will take this as the highest compliment I could possibly pay him for this class of work. Nevertheless, I have no hesitation in saying that if the real

difficulty — one compared to which mere disguise is child's play — were faced and vanquished, the interest of the play would be trebled. That difficulty, I need hardly explain, is the presentation to the spectators of a single figure which shall yet be known to them as the work of two distinct actors. As it is, instead of two men in one, we have one man in two, which makes the play incredible as well as impossible.

However, as I have said, the play serves its turn. The one act into which the doubling business enters for a moment only (a very disastrous moment, by the way) is thoroughly effective, and gives Mr. Tree an opportunity for a remarkable display of his peculiar talent as an imaginative actor. Indeed, he plays so well as the prisoner in the dock that all the applause goes to the bad playing of the advocate who saves himself from the unpleasantness of defending his friend at the expense of his wife's reputation by the trite expedient of dropping down dead. I dare say this will seem a wanton disparagement of a stage effect which was unquestionably highly successful, and to which Mr. Waller led up by such forcible and sincere acting that his going wrong at the last moment was all the more aggravating. But if to let the broken-hearted Raymond de Noirville suddenly change into Sergeant Buzfuz at the very climax of his anguish was to go wrong, then it seems to me that Mr. Lewis Waller certainly did go wrong. When he turned to the jury and apostrophized them as GENTLEMEN, in a roll of elocutionary thunder, Raymond de Noirville was done for; and it was really Lucien Laroque who held the scene together. The gallery responded promptly enough to Mr. Waller, as the jury always does respond to Sergeant Buzfuz; but I venture to hope that the very

noisiness of the applause has by this time convinced him that he ought not to have provoked it.

By the way, since Mr. Tree is fortunate enough to have his band made so much of as it is by Mr. Raymond Roze, he would, I think, find it economical to lavish a few "extra gentlemen" (or ladies) on the orchestra, even if they had to be deducted from his stage crowd. Two or three additional strings would make all the difference in such works as Mendelssohn's "Ruy Blas" overture.

Considering the lustre of the blazing galaxy of intellect which has undertaken the administration of the New Century Theatre, I really think the matinées of that institution might be better tempered to the endurance of the public. It is true that one has the vindictive satisfaction of seeing the committee men sharing the fatigue of the subscribers, and striving to outface their righteous punishment with feeble grins at their own involuntary yawns. But this is not precisely the sort of fun the New Century Theatre promised us. I ask Mr. Archer, Mr. Massingham, Mr. Sutro, and Miss Robins, what the —— I beg Miss Robins's pardon — what on earth they mean by putting on a long first piece in front of an important four-act play for no other purpose, apparently, than to damage the effect of that play, and overdrive a willing audience by keeping it in the theatre from half-past two until a quarter to six. If the first piece had been one of surpassing excellence, or in any way specially germane to the purposes of the New Century Theatre, I should still say that it had better have been reserved for another occasion. But as it only needed a little obvious trimming to be perfectly eligible for the evening bill at any of our ordinary commercial theatres, its inclusion must be con-

demned as the very wantonness of bad management, unless there was some munificent subscriber to be propitiated by it. Or was Miss Kate Rorke's appearance as the lodging-house slavey the attraction? If so, Miss Rorke and the committee have to share between them the responsibility of a stupendous error of judgment. Miss Rorke is congenitally incapable of reproducing in her own person any single touch, national or idiosyncratic, of Clorindar Ann. She can industriously pronounce face as fice, mile as mawl, and no as nah-oo; but she cannot do it in a London voice; nor is her imaginative, idealistic, fastidious sentiment even distantly related to the businesslike passions of the cockney kitchen. Whatever parts she may have been miscast for before she won her proper place on the stage, she had better now refer applicants for that sort of work to Miss Louie Freear or Miss Cicely Richards. It would give me great pleasure to see Miss Rorke again as Helena in "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; but I think I had almost rather be boiled alive than go a second time to see "Honesty," which, on this occasion, was most decidedly not the best policy for the New Century Theatre.

Hardly anything gives a livelier sense of the deadness of the English stage in the eighties than the failure of Stevenson and Mr. Henley to effect a lodgment on it. To plead that they were no genuine dramatists is not to the point: pray what were some of the illiterate bunglers and ignoramuses whose work was preferred to theirs? Ask any playgoer whether he remembers any of the fashionable successes of that period as vividly as he remembers "Deacon Brodie"! If he says yes, you will find that he is either a simple liar, or else no true playgoer, but merely a critic, a fireman, a police-

man, or some other functionary who has to be paid to induce him to enter a theatre. Far be it from me to pretend that Henley and Stevenson, in their Boy Buccaneer phase, took the stage seriously — unless it were the stage of pasteboard scenes and characters, and tin lamps and slides. But even that stage was in the eighties so much more artistic than the real stage — so much more sanctified by the childish fancies and dreams in which real dramatic art begins, that it was just by writing for it, and not for the West End houses, that Henley and Stevenson contrived to get ahead of their time. "Admiral Guinea" is perhaps their most frankly boyish compound of piracy and pasteboard, coming occasionally very close to poetry and pasteboard, and written with prodigious literary virtuosity. Indeed, both of them had a literary power to which maturity could add nothing except prudence, which in this style is the mother of dulness. Their boyishness comes out in their barbarous humor, their revelling in blood and broadswords, crime, dark lanterns, and delirious supernatural terrors: above all, in their recklessly irreligious love of adventure for its own sake. We see it too in the unnatural drawing of the girl Arethusa, though the womanliness aimed at is not altogether ill divined in the abstract. The Admiral himself is rank pasteboard; but the cleverness with which he is cut out and colored, and his unforgettable story of his last voyage and his wife's death, force us to overlook the impossibilities in his anatomy, and to pretend, for the heightening of our own enjoyment, that he not only moves on the authors' slides, and speaks with their voices, but lives. Pew is more convincing; for his qualities are those that a man might have; only, if a real man had them, he would end, not

as a blind beggar, but as ruler of the Queen's Navee. This does not trouble the ordinary playgoer, who, simple creature! accepts Pew's villainy as a sufficient cause for his exceeding downness on his luck. Students of real life will not be so easily satisfied: they will see in him the tact, ability, force of character, and boldness which have been associated with abominable vices in many eminently successful men, but which no vicious tramp, however impudent, reckless, greedy and ferocious, ever had, or ever will have.

The juvenility of the piece is very apparent indeed in the contrast between the clumsy conduct of the action, and the positive inspiration of some of the stage effects. The blind robber, disturbed by the strangely tranquil footsteps of the sleepwalker, and believing himself to be hidden by the night until, groping his way to the door, he burns his hand in the candle and infers that he must be visible to the silent presence, is a masterstroke of stage effect; but it is not better in its way than the quieter point made when the Admiral opens his famous treasure chest and shows that it contains an old chain, an old ring, an old wedding dress, and nothing more. These triumphs are the fruit of the authors' genius. When we come to the product of their ordinary intelligence, our admiration changes to exasperation. Anything more ludicrously inept than the far-fetching of Kit French into the Admiral's house by Pew in the third act, will not soon be seen again, even on the English stage. The fact is, Kit French should be cut out of the play altogether; for though it is hard to leave Arethewsa without her Sweet Willyum, it is still harder to have a work of art which in all other respects hits its mark, reduced to absurdity by him. One burglary is enough; and three acts are

enough. On reflection, I relent so far that I think that Kit might be allowed to live for the purpose of drawing out of Admiral Guinea and Arethusa their very fine scene at the beginning of the third act, and officiating as Pew's executioner; but the rest of his exploits, like the House of Lords, are useless, dangerous, and ought to be abolished.

The performance was a remarkably good one. The stage manager should not have so far neglected the ancient counsel to "jine his flats" as to leave a large gap in the roof of the Admiral's house; but there was nothing else to complain of. Mr. Sidney Valentine had a rare chance as Pew. He proved unable to bear the extraordinary strain put by the authors on his capacity for rum, and frankly stopped after the first gallon or two; but in no other respect was he found wanting. Mr. Mollison played the Admiral very carefully and methodically. The part was not seen by flashes of lightning; but none of it was lost. What man could do with the impossible Kit French Mr. Loraine did; and Miss Dolores Drummond was well within her means as the landlady of the Benbow Inn. The part of Arethusa, pretty as it is, is so romantically literary that Miss Cissie Loftus could show us nothing about herself in it except what we already know: namely, that she is like nobody else on the stage or off it, and that her vocation is beyond all doubt.

HAMLET REVISITED

18 December, 1897.

PUBLIC feeling has been much harrowed this week by the accounts from America of the 144 hours' bicycle race; but what are the horrors of such an exhibition compared to those of the hundred-nights run of Hamlet! On Monday last I went, in my private capacity, to witnesss the last lap but five of the Lyceum trial of endurance. The performers had passed through the stage of acute mania, and were for the most part sleep-walking in a sort of dazed blank-verse dream. Mr. Barnes raved of some New England maiden named Affection Poo; the subtle distinctions made by Mrs. Patrick Campbell between madness and sanity had blurred off into a placid idiocy turned to favor and to prettiness; Mr. Forbes Robertson, his lightness of heart all gone, wandered into another play at the words "Sleep? No more!" which he delivered as, "Sleep no more." Fortunately, before he could add "Macbeth does murder sleep," he relapsed into Hamlet and saved the situation. And yet some of the company seemed all the better for their unnatural exercise. The King was in uproarious spirits; and the Ghost, always comfortable, was now positively pampered, his indifference to the inconveniences of purgatory having developed into a bean-fed enjoyment of them. Fortinbras, as I judged, had sought consolation in religion: he was anxious concerning Hamlet's eternal welfare; but his general health seemed excellent. As Mr. Gould did not play on the occasion of my first visit, I could not compare him with his former self; but his condition

was sufficiently grave. His attitude was that of a cast-away mariner who has no longer hope enough to scan the horizon for a sail; yet even in this extremity his unconquerable generosity of temperament had not deserted him. When his cue came, he would jump up and lend a hand with all his old alacrity and resolution. Naturally the players of the shorter parts had suffered least: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were only begining to enjoy themselves; and Bernardo (or was it Marcellus?) was still eagerly working up his part to concert pitch. But there could be no mistake as to the general effect. Mr. Forbes Robertson's exhausting part had been growing longer and heavier on his hands; whilst the support of the others had been falling off; so that he was keeping up the charm of the representation almost single-handed just when the torturing fatigue and monotony of nightly repetition had made the task most difficult. To the public, no doubt, the justification of the effort is its success. There was no act which did not contain at least one scene finely and movingly played; indeed some of the troubled passages gained in verisimilitude by the tormented condition of the actor. But "Hamlet" is a very long play; and it only seems a short one when the high-mettled comedy with which it is interpenetrated from beginning to end leaps out with all the lightness and spring of its wonderful loftiness of temper. This was the secret of the delighted surprise with which the public, when the run began, found that "Hamlet," far from being a funereally classical bore, was full of a celestial gaiety and fascination. It is this rare vein that gives out first when the exigencies of theatrical commerce force an actor to abuse it. A sentimental Hamlet can go on for two years, or ten for the matter of that, without much

essential depreciation of the performance; but the actor who sounds Hamlet from the lowest note to the top of his compass very soon finds that compass contracting at the top. On Monday night the first act, the third act, and the fifth act from the entrance of Laertes onward, had lost little more than they had gained as far as Mr. Forbes Robertson was concerned; but the second act, and the colloquy with the gravedigger, which were the triumphs of the representation in its fresher stages, were pathetically dulled, with the result that it could no longer be said that the length of the play was forgotten.

The worst of the application of the long-run system to heroic plays is that, instead of killing the actor, it drives him to limit himself to such effects as he can repeat to infinity without committing suicide. The opposite system, in its extreme form of the old stock company playing two or three different pieces every night, led to the same evasion in a more offensive form. The recent correspondence in the "Morning Post" on The Stage as a Profession, to which I have myself luminously contributed, has produced the usual fallacious eulogies of the old stock company as a school of acting. You can no more prevent contributors to public correspondences falling into this twenty-times-exploded error than from declaring that duelling was a school of good manners, that the lash suppressed garroting, or any other of the gratuitous ignorances of the amateur sociologist. The truth is, it is just as impossible for a human being to study and perform a new part of any magnitude every day as to play Hamlet for a hundred consecutive nights. Nevertheless, if an actor is required to do these things, he will find some way out of the difficulty without refusing. The stock

actor solved the problem by adopting a "line": for example, if his "line" was old age, he acquired a trick of doddering and speaking in a cracked voice: if juvenility, he swaggered and effervesced. With these accomplishments, eked out by a few rules of thumb as to wigs and face-painting, one deplorable step dance, and one still more deplorable "combat," he "swallowed" every part given to him in a couple of hours, and regurgitated it in the evening over the footlights, always in the same manner, however finely the dramatist might have individualized it. His infamous incompetence at last swept him from the reputable theatres into the barns and booths; and it was then that he became canonized, in the imagination of a posterity that had never suffered from him, as the incarnation of the one quality in which he was quite damnably deficient: to wit, versatility. His great contribution to dramatic art was the knack of earning a living for fifty years on the stage without ever really acting, or either knowing or caring for the difference between the "Comedy of Errors" and "Box and Cox."

A moment's consideration will show that the results of the long-run system at its worst are more bearable than the horrors of the past. Also, that even in point of giving the actor some chance of varying his work, the long-run system is superior, since the modern actor may at all events exhaust the possibilities of his part before it exhausts him, whereas the stock actor, having barely time to apply his bag of tricks to his daily task, never varies his treatment by a hair's breadth from one half century to another. The best system, of course, lies between these extremes. Take the case of the great Italian actors who have visited us, and whose acting is of an excellence apparently quite beyond the reach

of our best English performers. We find them extremely chary of playing every night. They have a repertory containing plays which count as resting places for them. For example, Duse relieves Magda with Mirandolina just as our own Shakespearean star actors used to relieve Richard the Third and Othello with Charles Surface and Don Felix. But even with this mitigation no actor can possibly play leading parts of the first order six nights a week all the year round unless he underplays them, or routines them mechanically in the old stock manner, or faces a terrible risk of disablement by paralysis, or, finally, resorts to alcohol or morphia, with the usual penalties. What we want in order to get the best work is a repertory theatre with alternative casts. If, for instance, we could have "Hamlet" running at the Lyceum with Sir Henry Irving and Miss Ellen Terry on Thursdays and Saturdays, Mr. Forbes Robertson and Mrs. Patrick Campbell on Wednesdays and Fridays, and the other two days devoted to comedies in which all four could occasionally appear, with such comedians as Mr. Charles Wyndham, Mr. Weedon Grossmith, Mr. Bourchier, Mr. Cyril Maude, and Mr. Hawtrey, then we should have a theatre which we could invite serious people to attend without positively insulting them. I am aware that the precise combination which I have named is not altogether a probable one at present; but there is no reason why we should not at least turn our faces in that direction. The actor-manager system, which has hitherto meant the star system carried to its utmost possible extreme, has made the theatre so insufferable that, now that its monopoly has been broken up by the rise of the suburban theatres, there is a distinct weakening of the jealous and shameless individualism of the last

twenty years, and a movement towards combination and co-operation.

By the way, is it quite prudent to start a public correspondence on the Stage as a Profession? Suppose some one were to tell the truth about it!

PEACE AND GOOD WILL TO MANAGERS

The Babes in the Wood. The Children's Grand Pantomime, by Arthur Sturgess and Arthur Collins. Music by J. M. Glover. Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, 27 December, 1897.

I AM sorry to have to introduce the subject of Christmas in these articles. It is an indecent subject; a cruel, gluttonous subject; a drunken, disorderly subject; a wasteful, disastrous subject; a wicked, cadging, lying filthy, blasphemous, and demoralizing subject. Christmas is forced on a reluctant and disgusted nation by the shopkeepers and the press: on its own merits it would wither and shrivel in the fiery breath of universal hatred; and any one who looked back to it would be turned into a pillar of greasy sausages. Yet, though it is over now for a year, and I can go out without positively elbowing my way through groves of carcases, I am dragged back to it, with my soul full of loathing, by the pantomime.

The pantomime ought to be a redeeming feature of Christmas, since it professedly aims at developing the artistic possibilities of our Saturnalia. But its professions are like all the other Christmas professions:

what the pantomime actually does is to abuse the Christmas toleration of dulness, senselessness, vulgarity and extravagance to a degree utterly incredible by people who have never been inside a theatre. The manager spends five hundred pounds to produce two penn'orth of effect. As a shilling's worth is needed to fill the gallery, he has to spend three thousand pounds for the "gods," seven thousand five hundred for the pit, and so on in proportion, except that when it comes to the stalls and boxes he caters for the children alone, depending on their credulity to pass off his twopence as a five-shilling piece. And yet even this is not done systematically and intelligently. The wildest superfluity and extravagance in one direction is wasted by the most sordid niggardliness in another. The rough rule is to spend money recklessly on whatever can be seen and heard and recognized as costly, and to economize on invention, fancy, dramatic faculty — in short, on brains. It is only when the brains get thrown in gratuitously through the accident of some of the contracting parties happening to possess them — a contingency which managerial care cannot always avert — that the entertainment acquires sufficient form or purpose to make it humanly apprehensible. To the mind's eye and ear the modern pantomime, as purveyed by the late Sir Augustus Harris, is neither visible nor audible. It is a glittering, noisy void, horribly wearisome and enervating, like all performances which worry the physical senses without any recreative appeal to the emotions and through them to the intellect.

I grieve to say that these remarks have lost nothing of their force by the succession of Mr. Arthur Collins to Sir Augustus Harris. In Drury Lane drama Mr.

Collins made a decided advance on his predecessor. In pantomime he has, I think, also shown superior connoisseurship in selecting pretty dummies for the display of his lavishly expensive wardrobe; but the only other respect in which he has outdone his late chief is the cynicism with which he has disregarded, I will not say the poetry of the nursery tale, because poetry is unthinkable in such a connection, but the bare coherence and common sense of the presentation of its incidents. The spectacular scenes exhibit Mr. Collins as a manager to whom a thousand pounds is as five shillings. The dramatic scenes exhibit him as one to whom a crown-piece is as a million. If Mr. Dan Leno had asked for a hundred-guinea tunic to wear during a single walk across the stage, no doubt he would have got it, with a fifty-guinea hat and sword-belt to boot. If he had asked for ten guineas' worth of the time of a competent dramatic humorist to provide him with at least one line that might not have been pirated from the nearest Cheap Jack, he would, I suspect, have been asked whether he wished to make Drury Lane bankrupt for the benefit of dramatic authors. I hope I may never again have to endure anything more dismally futile than the efforts of Mr. Leno and Mr. Herbert Campbell to start a passable joke in the course of their stumblings and wanderings through barren acres of gag on Boxing-night. Their attempt at a travesty of "Hamlet" reached a pitch of abject resourcelessness which could not have been surpassed if they really had been a couple of school children called on for a prize-day Shakespearean recitation without any previous warning. An imitation of Mr. Forbes Robertson and Mrs. Patrick Campbell would have been cheap and obvious enough; but even this they were unequal

to. Mr. Leno, fortunately for himself, was inspired at the beginning of the business to call "Hamlet" "Ham." Several of the easily amused laughed at this; and thereafter, whenever the travesty became so frightfully insolvent in ideas as to make it almost impossible to proceed, Mr. Leno said "Ham," and saved the situation. What will happen now is that Mr. Leno will hit on a new point of the "Ham" order at, say, every second performance. As there are two performances a day, he will have accumulated thirty "wheezes," as he calls them, by the end of next month, besides being cut down to strict limits of time. In February, then, his part will be quite bearable — probably even very droll — and Mr. Collins will thereby be confirmed in his belief that if you engage an eccentric comedian of recognized gagging powers you need not take the trouble to write a part for him. But would it not be wiser, under these circumstances, to invite the critics on the last night of the pantomime instead of on the first? Mr. Collins will probably reply that by doing so he would lose the benefit of the press notices, which, as a matter of Christmas custom, are not criticisms, but simply gratuitous advertisements given as a Christmas-box by the newspaper to the manager who advertises all the year round. And I am sorry to say he will be quite right.

It is piteous to see the wealth of artistic effort which is annually swamped in the morass of purposeless wastefulness that constitutes a pantomime. At Drury Lane many of the costumes are extremely pretty, and some of them, notably those borrowed for the flower ballet from one of Mr. Crane's best-known series of designs, rise above mere theatrical prettiness to the highest class of decorative art available for fantastic stage

purposes. Unhappily, every stroke that is at all delicate, or rare, or precious is multiplied, and repeated, and obtruded, usually on the limbs of some desolatingly incompetent young woman, until its value is heavily discounted. Still, some of the scenes are worth looking at for five minutes, though not for twenty. The orchestral score is very far above the general artistic level of the pantomime. The instrumental resources placed at the disposal of Mr. Glover — quite ungrudgingly as far as they consist of brass — would suffice for a combined Bach festival and Bayreuth "Götterdämmerung" performance. To hear a whole battery of Bach trumpets, supported by a park of trombones, blasting the welkin with the exordium of Wagner's Kaisermarsch, is an ear-splitting ecstasy not to be readily forgotten; but these mechanical effects are really cheaper than the daintiness and wit of the vocal accompaniments, in which Mr. Glover shows a genuine individual and original style in addition to his imposing practical knowledge of band business.

If I were Mr. Collins I should reduce the first four scenes to one short one, and get some person with a little imagination, some acquaintance with the story of the Babes in the Wood, and at least a rudimentary faculty for amusing people, to write the dialogue for it. I should get Messrs. Leno and Campbell to double the parts of the robbers with those of the babes, and so make the panorama scene tolerable. I should reduce the second part to the race-course scene, which is fairly funny, with just one front scene, in which full scope might be allowed for Mr. Leno's inspiration, and the final transformation. I should either cut the harlequinade out, or, at the expense of the firms it advertises, pay the audience for looking at it; or else I

should take as much trouble with it as Mr. Tree took with "Chand d'Habits" at Her Majesty's. And I should fill up the evening with some comparatively amusing play by Ibsen or Browning.

Finally, may I ask our magistrates on what ground they permit the legislation against the employment of very young children as money makers for their families to be practically annulled in favor of the pantomimes? If the experience, repeated twice a day for three months, is good for the children, I suggest that there need be no difficulty in filling their places with volunteers from among the children of middle and upper-class parents anxious to secure such a delightful and refining piece of education for their offspring. If it is not good for them, why do the magistrates deliberately license it? I venture to warn our managers that their present monstrous abuse of magistrates' licenses can only end in a cast-iron clause in the next Factory Act unconditionally forbidding the employment of children under thirteen on any pretext whatever.

TAPPERTIT ON CÆSAR

Julius Cæsar. Her Majesty's Theatre, 22 January, 1898.

THE truce with Shakespeare is over. It was only possible whilst "Hamlet" was on the stage. "Hamlet" is the tragedy of private life — nay, of individual bachelor-poet life. It belongs to a detached residence, a select library, an exclusive circle, to no occupation, to fathomless boredom, to impenitent

mugwumpism, to the illusion that the futility of these things is the futility of existence, and its contemplation philosophy: in short, to the dream-fed gentlemanism of the age which Shakespeare inaugurated in English literature: the age, that is, of the rising middle-class bringing into power the ideas taught it by its servants in the kitchen, and its fathers in the shop — ideas now happily passing away as the onslaught of modern democracy offers to the kitchen-taught and home-bred the alternative of achieving a real superiority or going ignominiously under in the class conflict.

It is when we turn to "Julius Cæsar," the most splendidly written political melodrama we possess, that we realize the apparently immortal author of "Hamlet" as a man, not for all time, but for an age only, and that, too, in all solidly wise and heroic aspects, the most despicable of all the ages in our history. It is impossible for even the most judicially-minded critic to look without a revulsion of indignant contempt at this travestying of a great man as a silly braggart, whilst the pitiful gang of mischief-makers who destroyed him are lauded as statesmen and patriots. There is not a single sentence uttered by Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar that is, I will not say worthy of him, but even worthy of an average Tammany boss. Brutus is nothing but a familiar type of English suburban preacher: politically he would hardly impress the Thames Conservancy Board. Cassius is a vehemently assertive nonentity. It is only when we come to Antony, unctuous voluptuary and self-seeking sentimental demagogue, that we find Shakespeare in his depth; and in his depth, of course, he is superlative. Regarded as a crafty stage job, the play is a triumph: rhetoric, claptrap, effective gushes of emotion, all the devices

of the popular playwright, are employed with a profusion of power that almost breaks their backs. No doubt there are slips and slovenlinesses of the kind that careful revisers eliminate; but they count for so little in the mass of accomplishment that it is safe to say that the dramatist's art can be carried no further on that plane. If Goethe, who understood Cæsar and the significance of his death — "the most senseless of deeds" he called it — had treated the subject, his conception of it would have been as superior to Shakespeare's as St. John's Gospel is to the "Police News"; but his treatment could not have been more magnificently successful. As far as a sonority, imagery, wit, humor, energy of imagination, power over language, and a whimsically keen eye for idiosyncrasies can make a dramatist, Shakespeare was the king of dramatists. Unfortunately, a man may have them all and yet conceive high affairs of state exactly as Simon Tappertit did. In one of the scenes in "Julius Cæsar" a conceited poet bursts into the tent of Brutus and Cassius, and exhorts them not to quarrel with one another. If Shakespeare had been able to present his play to the ghost of the great Julius, he would probably have had much the same reception. He certainly would have deserved it.

When it was announced that Mr. Tree had resolved to give special prominence to the character of Cæsar in his acting version, the critics winked, and concluded simply that the actor-manager was going to play Antony and not Brutus. Therefore I had better say that Mr. Tree must stand acquitted of any belittlement of the parts which compete so strongly with his own. Before going to Her Majesty's I was curious enough to block out for myself a division of the play into three

acts; and I found that Mr. Tree's division corresponded exactly with mine. Mr. Waller's opportunities as Brutus, and Mr. McLeay's as Cassius, are limited only by their own ability to take advantage of them; and Mr. Louis Calvert figures as boldly in the public eye as he did in his own production of "Antony and Cleopatra" last year at Manchester. Indeed, Mr. Calvert is the only member of the company who achieves an unequivocal success. The preference expressed in the play by Cæsar for fat men may, perhaps, excuse Mr. Calvert for having again permitted himself to expand after his triumphant reduction of his girth for his last appearance in London. However, he acted none the worse: in fact, nobody else acted so skilfully or originally. The others, more heavily burdened, did their best, quite in the spirit of the man who had never played the fiddle, but had no doubt he could if he tried. Without oratory, without style, without specialized vocal training, without any practice worth mentioning, they assaulted the play with cheerful self-sufficiency, and gained great glory by the extent to which, as a masterpiece of the playwright's trade, it played itself. Some small successes were not lacking. Cæsar's nose was good: Calpurnia's bust was worthy of her: in such parts Garrick and Siddons could have achieved no more. Miss Evelyn Millard's Roman matron in the style of Richardson — Cato's daughter as Clarissa — was an unlooked-for novelty; but it cost a good deal of valuable time to get in the eighteenth century between the lines of the first B. C. By operatic convention — the least appropriate of all conventions — the boy Lucius was played by Mrs. Tree, who sang Sullivan's ultra-nineteenth-century "Orpheus with his Lute," modulations and all, to a pizzicato accompani-

ment supposed to be played on a lyre with eight open and unstopped strings, a feat complexly and absurdly impossible. Mr. Waller, as Brutus, failed in the first half of the play. His intention clearly was to represent Brutus as a man superior to fate and circumstance; but the effect he produced was one of insensibility. Nothing could have been more unfortunate; for it is through the sensibility of Brutus that the audience have to learn what they cannot learn from the phlegmatic pluck of Casca or the narrow vindictiveness of Cassius: that is, the terrible momentousness, the harrowing anxiety and dread, of the impending catastrophe. Mr. Waller left that function to the thunderstorm. From the death of Cæsar onward he was better; and his appearance throughout was effective; but at best his sketch was a water-color one. Mr. Franklyn McLeay carried off the honors of the evening by his deliberate stageyness and imposing assumptiveness: that is, by as much of the grand style as our playgoers now understand; but in the last act he was monotonously violent, and died the death of an incorrigible poseur, not of a noble Roman. Mr. Tree's memory failed him as usual; and a good deal of the technical part of his work was botched and haphazard, like all Shakespearean work nowadays; nevertheless, like Mr. Calvert, he made the audience believe in the reality of the character before them. But it is impossible to praise his performance in detail. I cannot recall any single passage in the scene after the murder that was well done: in fact, he only secured an effective curtain by bringing Calpurnia on the stage to attitudinize over Cæsar's body. To say that the demagogic oration in the Forum produced its effect is nothing; for its effect is inevitable, and Mr. Tree neither made the most of

it nor handled it with any pretence of mastery or certainty. But he was not stupid, nor inane, nor Bard-of-Avon ridden; and he contrived to interest the audience in Antony instead of trading on their ready-made interest in Mr. Beerbohm Tree. And for that many sins may be forgiven him nowadays, when the playgoer, on first nights at all events, goes to see the cast rather than the play.

What is missing in the performance, for want of the specific Shakespearean skill, is the Shakespearean music. When we come to those unrivalled grandiose passages in which Shakespeare turns on the full organ, we want to hear the sixteen-foot pipes booming, or, failing them (as we often must, since so few actors are naturally equipped with them), the ennobled tone, and the tempo suddenly steadied with the majesty of deeper purpose. You have, too, those moments when the verse, instead of opening up the depths of sound, rises to its most brilliant clangor, and the lines ring like a thousand trumpets. If we cannot have these effects, or if we can only have genteel drawing-room arrangements of them, we cannot have Shakespeare; and that is what is mainly the matter at Her Majesty's: there are neither trumpets nor pedal pipes there. The conversation is metrical and emphatic in an elocutionary sort of way; but it makes no distinction between the arid prairies of blank verse which remind one of "Henry VI" at its crudest, and the places where the morass suddenly piles itself into a mighty mountain. Cassius in the first act has a twaddling forty-line speech, base in its matter and mean in its measure, followed immediately by the magnificent torrent of rhetoric, the first burst of true Shakespearean music in the play, beginning, —

> "Why man, he doth bestride the narrow world
> Like a Colossus; and we petty men
> Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
> To find ourselves dishonorable graves."

I failed to catch the slightest change of elevation or reinforcement of feeling when Mr. McLeay passed from one to the other. His tone throughout was dry; and it never varied. By dint of energetic, incisive articulation, he drove his utterances harder home than the others; but the best lines seemed to him no more than the worst: there were no heights and depths, no contrast of black thunder-cloud and flaming lightning flash, no stirs and surprises. Yet he was not inferior in oratory to the rest. Mr. Waller certainly cannot be reproached with dryness of tone; and his delivery of the speech in the Forum was perhaps the best piece of formal elocution we got; but he also kept at much the same level throughout, and did not at any moment attain to anything that could be called grandeur. Mr. Tree, except for a conscientiously desperate effort to cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war in the robustious manner, with no better result than to all but extinguish his voice, very sensibly left oratory out of the question, and tried conversational sincerity, which answered so well that his delivery of "This was the noblest Roman of them all" came off excellently.

The real hero of the revival is Mr. Alma Tadema. The scenery and stage coloring deserve everything that has been said of them. But the illusion is wasted by want of discipline and want of thought behind the scenes. Every carpenter seems to make it a point of honor to set the cloths swinging in a way that makes Rome reel and the audience positively seasick. In

Brutus's house the door is on the spectator's left: the knocks on it come from the right. The Roman soldiers take the field each man with his two javelins neatly packed up like a fishing-rod. After a battle, in which they are supposed to have made the famous Roman charge, hurling these javelins in and following them up sword in hand, they come back carrying the javelins still undisturbed in their rug-straps, in perfect trim for a walk-out with the nursery-maids of Philippi.

The same want of vigilance appears in the acting version. For example, though the tribunes Flavius and Marullus are replaced by two of the senators, the lines referring to them by name are not altered. But the oddest oversight is the retention in the tent scene of the obvious confusion of the original version of the play, in which the death of Portia was announced to Brutus by Messala, with the second version, into which the quarrel scene was written to strengthen the fourth act. In this version Brutus, already in possession of the news, reveals it to Cassius. The play has come down to us with the two alternative scenes strung together; so that Brutus's reception of Messala's news, following his own revelation of it to Cassius, is turned into a satire on Roman fortitude, the suggestion being that the secret of the calm with which a noble Roman received the most terrible tidings in public was that it had been carefully imparted to him in private beforehand. Mr. Tree has not noticed this; and the two scenes are gravely played one after the other at Her Majesty's. This does not matter much to our playgoers, who never venture to use their common sense when Shakespeare is in question; but it wastes time. Mr. Tree may without hesitation cut out Pindarus and

Messala, and go straight on from the bowl of wine to Brutus's question about Philippi.

The music composed for the occasion by Mr. Raymond Roze made me glad that I had already taken care to acknowledge the value of Mr. Roze's services to Mr. Tree; for this time he has missed the Roman vein rather badly. To be a Frenchman was once no disqualification for the antique, because French musicians used to be brought up on Gluck as English ones were brought up on Handel. But Mr. Roze composes as if Gluck had been supplanted wholly in his curriculum by Gounod and Bizet. If that prelude to the third act were an attempt to emulate the overtures to "Alceste" or "Iphigenia" I could have forgiven it. But to give us the soldiers' chorus from Faust, crotchet for crotchet and triplet for triplet, with nothing changed but the notes, was really too bad.

I am sorry I must postpone until next week all consideration of Mr. Pinero's "Trelawny of the Wells." The tragic circumstances under which I do so are as follows: The manager of the Court Theatre, Mr. Arthur Chudleigh, did not honor the "Saturday Review" with the customary invitation to the first performance. When a journal is thus slighted, it has no resource but to go to its telephone and frantically offer any terms to the box-offices for a seat for the first night. But on fashionable occasions the manager is always master of the situation: there are never any seats to be had except from himself. It was so on this occasion; and the "Saturday Review" was finally brought to its knees at the feet of the Sloane Square telephone. In response to a humble appeal, the instrument scornfully replied that "three lines of adverse criticism were of no use to it." Naturally my

curiosity was excited to an extraordinary degree by the fact that the Court Theatre telephone, which knew all about Mr. Pinero's comedy, should have such a low opinion of it as to be absolutely certain that it would deserve an unprecedentedly contemptuous treatment at my hands. I instantly purchased a place for the fourth performance, Charlotte Corday and Julius Cæsar occupying my time on the second and third nights; and I am now in a position to assure that telephone that its misgivings were strangely unwarranted, and that, if it will excuse my saying so, it does not know a good comedietta when it sees one. Reserving my reasons for next week, I offer Mr. Pinero my apologies for a delay which is not my own fault. (Will the "Mining Journal" please copy, as Mr. Pinero reads no other paper during the current fortnight.)

MR. PINERO'S PAST

Charlotte Corday: a drama in four acts. Anonymous. Adelphi Theatre, 21 January, 1898.

Trelawny of the "Wells": an original comedietta in four acts. By Arthur W. Pinero. Court Theatre, 20 January, 1898.

MR. PINERO has not got over it yet. That fatal turning-point in life, the fortieth birthday, still oppresses him. In "The Princess and the Butterfly" he unbosomed himself frankly, making his soul's trouble the open theme of his play. But this was taken in such extremely bad part by myself and others (gnawed by the same sorrow) that he became

shy on the subject, and, I take it, began to cast about for some indirect means of returning to it. It seems to have occurred to him at last that by simply showing on the stage the fashions of forty years ago, the crinoline, the flounced skirt, the garibaldi, the turban hat, the chenille net, the horse-hair sofa, the peg-top trouser, and the "weeper" whisker, the chord of memory could be mutely struck without wounding my vanity. The delicacy of this mood inspires the whole play, which has touched me more than anything else Mr. Pinero has ever written.

But first let me get these old fashions — or rather these middle-aged fashions: after all, one is not Methuselah — off my mind. It is significant of the difference between my temperament and Mr. Pinero's, that when he, as a little boy, first heard "Ever of thee I 'm fondly dreaming," he wept; whereas, at the same tender age, I simply noted with scorn the obvious plagiarism from "Cheer, Boys, Cheer."

To me the sixties waft ballads by Virginia Gabriel and airs from "Il Trovatore"; but Mr. Pinero's selection is none the less right; for Virginia Gabriel belonged to Cavendish Square and not to Bagnigge Wells; and "Il Trovatore" is still alive, biding its time to break out again when M. Jean de Reszke also takes to fondly dreaming.

The costumes at the Court Theatre are a mixture of caricature and realism. Miss Hilda Spong, whose good looks attain most happily to the 1860 ideal (Miss Ellen Terry had not then been invented) is dressed exactly after Leech's broadest caricatures of crinolined English maidenhood; whereas Miss Irene Vanbrugh clings to the finer authority of Millais' masterly illustrations to Trollope. None of the men are prop-

erly dressed: the "lounge coat" which we all wear unblushingly to-day as a jacket, with its corners sloped away in front, and its length behind involving no friction with the seats of our chairs, then clung nervously to the traditions of the full coat, and was longer, straighter, rectangular — cornerder and franker as to the shoulders than Mr. Pinero has been able to persuade the tailors of the Court Theatre to make it to-day. I imagine, too, that Cockney dialect has changed a good deal since then. Somewhere in the eighties, Mr. Andrew Tuer pointed out in the "Pall Mall Gazette" that the conventional representations in fiction of London pronunciation had ceased to bear any recognizable relation to the actual speech of the coster and the flower-girl; and Mr. Anstey, in "Punch," was the first author to give general literary currency to Mr. Tuer's new phonetics. The lingo of Sam Weller had by that time passed away from London, though suggestions of it may be heard even to-day no further off than Hounslow. Sir Henry Irving can no longer be ridiculed, as he was in the seventies, for substituting pure vowel sounds for the customary colloquial diphthongs; for the man in the street, without at all aiming at the virtuosity of our chief actor, has himself independently introduced a novel series of pure vowels. Thus *i* has become *aw*, and *ow ah*. In spite of Sir Henry, *o* has not been turned into a true vowel; but it has become a very marked *ow*, whilst the English *a* is changed to a flagrant *i*. There is, somewhere in the old files of "All the Year Round," a Dickensian description of an illiterate lady giving a reading. Had she been represented as saying, "The scene tikes plice dahn in the Mawl En' Rowd" (takes place down in the Mile End Road) Dickens would apparently not have

understood the sentence, which no Londoner with ears can now mistake. On these grounds, I challenge the pronunciation of Avonia Bunn, in the person of Miss Pattie Browne, as an anachronism. I feel sure that if Avonia had made *so* rhyme to *thou* in the sixties, she would have been understood to have alluded to the feminine pig. On this point, however, my personal authority is not conclusive, as I did not reach London until the middle of the seventies. In England everything is twenty years out of date before it gets printed; and it may be that the change had been in operation long before it was accurately observed. It has also to be considered that the old literary school never dreamt of using its eyes or ears, and would invent descriptions of sights and sounds with an academic self-sufficiency which led later on to its death from acute and incurable imposture. Its ghost still walks in our resurrectionary reviewing enterprises, with precipitous effects on the circulation.

It is not in the nature of things possible that Mr. Pinero's first variation on the theme of "The Princess" should be successfully acted by a modern London company. If he had scoured the provinces and America for elderly actors, thirty years out of date, and, after raising their wildest hopes by a London engagement, met them at rehearsal with the brutal announcement that they were only wanted to burlesque themselves, the thing might doubtless have been done. But every line of the play proclaims the author incapable of such heartlessness. There are only two members of the "theatrical-folk" section of the cast who carry much conviction; and these are the two Robertsonians, to whom success comes only with the then new order. Miss Irene Vanbrugh is quite the woman who

was then the New Woman; and Mr. Paul Arthur, a contemporary American, only needs to seize the distinction made by the Atlantic between "comedy" and "cawmedy" to hit off the historical moment of the author of "Caste" to perfection. And Miss Spong's fairness, fortunately, is universal enough to fit all the centuries and all the decades. But when we come to Ferdinand Gadd, the leading juvenile of "The Wells," we find Mr. Gerald du Maurier in a difficulty. At his age his only chance of doing anything with the part is to suggest Sir Henry Irving in embryo. But Mr. Pinero has not written it that way: he has left Ferdinand Gadd in the old groove as completely as Mr. Crummles was. The result is that the part falls between two stools. The Telfers also miss the mark. Mr. Athol Forde, the English creator of Kroll in "Rosmersholm," is cut off from the sixties by a mighty gulf. Mrs. Telfer's criticism of stage queens as being "considered merely as parts, not worth a tinker's oath," is not founded on the real experience of Mrs. Saker, whose career has run on lighter lines. My own age in the sixties was so tender that I cannot pretend to know with any nicety what the "principal boy" of the pantomime was like in her petticoats as a private person at that period; but I have a strong suspicion that she tended to be older and occasionally stouter than the very latest thing in that line; and it is the ultra-latest thing that Miss Pattie Browne has studied for Avonia Bunn. On the whole I doubt whether the Court company knows a scrap more about the professional atmosphere of the old "Wells" than the audience.

The "non-theatrical folk" came off better, with one exception. I know that Mr. Dion Boucicault as Sir

William Gower can claim a long-established stage convention in favor of his method of portraying crusty senility. But I have grown out of all endurance of that convention. It is no more like a real old man than a wornout billiard table is like a meadow; and it wastes and worries and perverts the talent of an actor perfectly capable of making a sincere study of the part. We would all, I believe, willingly push the stage old man into the grave upon whose brink he has been cackling and doddering as long as we can remember him. If my vengeance could pursue him beyond the tomb, it should not stop there. But so far, at least, he shall go if my malice can prevail against him. Miss Isabel Bateman is almost charming as Sir William's ancient sister, and would be quite so if she also were not touched by the tradition that old age, in comedy, should always be made ridiculous. Mr. James Erskine is generally understood to be a Lordling, and, as such, a feeble amateur actor. I am bound to say, in defence of a trampled aristocracy, that he rose superior to the accident of birth, and acted his part as well as it could be acted. This, I observe, is explained away on the ground that he has only to be himself on the stage. I can only reply that the accomplishment of a feat so extremely difficult entitles him to count the explanation as a very high compliment. Mr. Sam Sothern gives us a momentary glimpse of Lord Dundreary: I wonder what the younger generation thinks of it? Miss Irene Vanbrugh, in the title part, which is not, to tell the truth, a difficult one in the hands of the right person, vanquishes it easily and successfully, getting quite outside those comic relief lines within which her lot has been so often cast.

As to the play itself, its charm, as I have already

hinted, lies in a certain delicacy which makes me loth to lay my fingers on it. The life that it reproduces had been already portrayed in the real sixties by Dickens in his sketch of the Crummles company, and by Anthony Trollope in his chronicles of Barsetshire. I cannot pretend to think that Mr. Pinero, in reverting to that period, has really had to turn back the clock as far as his own sympathies and ideals are concerned. It seems to me that the world is to him still the world of Johnny Eames and Lily Dale, Vincent Crummles and Newman Noggs: his Paula Tanquerays and Mrs. Ebbsmiths appearing as pure aberrations whose external differences he is able to observe as far as they can be observed without the inner clue, but whose point of view he has never found. That is why Mr. Pinero, as a critic of the advanced guard in modern life, is unendurable to me. When I meet a musician of the old school, and talk Rossini and Bellini and Donizetti, Spohr and Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer with him, we get on excellently together; for the music that is so empty and wooden and vapid and mechanical to the young lions of Bayreuth, is full of sentiment, imagination and dramatic force to us. But when he begins to deplore the "passing craze" for Wagner, and to explain the horrors and errors of the Bayreuth school: its lack of melody, its perpetual "recitative," its tearing discords, its noisy orchestration overwhelming and ruining the human voice, I get up and flee. The unsympathetic discourse about Wagner may be wittier than the sympathetic discourse about Donizetti; but that does not make it any the more tolerable to me, the speaker having passed from a subject he understands to one that has virtually no existence for him. It is just so with Mr. Pinero. When he plays

me the tunes of 1860, I appreciate and sympathize. Every stroke touches me: I dwell on the dainty workmanship shown in the third and fourth acts: I rejoice in being old enough to know the world of his dreams. But when he comes to 1890, then I thank my stars that he does not read the "Saturday Review." Please remember that it is the spirit and not the letter of the date that I insist on. "The Benefit of the Doubt" is dressed in the fashions of to-day; but it might have been written by Trollope. "Trelawny of the Wells" confessedly belongs to the days of Lily Dale. And whenever Lily Dale and not Mrs. Ebbsmith is in question, Mr. Pinero may face with complete equanimity the risk of picking up the "Saturday Review" in mistake for the "Mining Journal."

Very different are my sentiments towards the author of "Charlotte Corday" at the Adelphi, whoever he may be. He has missed a rare chance of giving our playgoers a lesson they richly deserve. Jean Paul Marat, "people's friend" and altruist *par excellence*, was a man just after their own hearts — a man whose virtue consisted in burning indignation at the sufferings of others and an intense desire to see them balanced by an exemplary retaliation. That is to say, his morality was the morality of the melodrama, and of the gallery which applauds frantically when the hero knocks the villain down. It is only by coarsely falsifying Marat's character that he has been made into an Adelphi villain — nay, prevented from bringing down the house as an Adelphi hero, as he certainly would if the audience could be shown the horrors that provoked him and the personal disinterestedness and sincerity with which he threw himself into a war of extermination against tyranny. Ibsen may have

earned the right to prove by the example of such men as Marat that these virtues were the making of a scoundrel more mischievous than the most openly vicious aristocrat for whose head he clamored; but the common run of our playgoers will have none of Ibsen's morality, and as much of Marat's as our romantic dramatists can stuff them with. Charlotte Corday herself was simply a female Marat. She, too, hated tyranny and idealized her passionate instinct for bloody retaliation. There is the true tragic irony in Marat's death at her hand: it was not really murder: it was suicide — Marat slain by the spirit of Marat. No bad theme for a playwright capable of handling it!

What the Adelphi play must seem to any one who understands this situation, I need not say. On its own conventional stage lines, it appears as a page of romantic history, exciting as the police intelligence is exciting, but not dramatic. Mr. Kyrle Bellew's Marat is a made-up business, extremely disfiguring to himself, which could be done as well or better by any other actor in the very competent company. Mrs. Brown Potter is everything that can be desired from the pictorial point of view (school of Delaroche); and her cleverness and diligence carry her successfully through all the theatrical business of the part. Miss Mabel Hackney and Mr. Vibart gain some ground by their playing: the older hands do not lose any. But the play is of no real importance.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

The Coxcomb. By Beaumont and Fletcher. Acted by the Elizabethan Stage Society in the Hall of the Inner Temple, 10 February, 1898.

I CONFESS to a condescending tolerance for Beaumont and Fletcher. It was, to be sure, no merit of theirs that they were born late enough to come into the field enthusiastically conscious of their art in the full development to which Shakespeare had brought it, instead of blundering upon its discovery like the earlier men. Still, merit or no merit, they were saved from the clumsy horseplay and butcherly rant of Marlowe as models of wit and eloquence, and from the resourceless tum-tum of his "mighty line" as a standard for their verse. When one thinks of the donnish insolence and perpetual thick-skinned swagger of Chapman over his unique achievements in sublime balderdash, and the opacity that prevented Webster, the Tussaud laureate, from appreciating his own stupidity — when one thinks of the whole rabble of dehumanized specialists in elementary blank verse posing as the choice and master-spirits of an art that had produced the stories of Chaucer and the old mystery plays, and was even then pregnant with "The Pilgrim's Progress," it is hard to keep one's critical blood cold enough to discriminate in favor of any Elizabethan whatever. Nothing short of a statue at Deptford to the benefactor of the human species who exterminated Marlowe, and the condemnation of Mr. Swinburne to spend the rest of his life in selling photographs of it to American tourists, would meet the

poetic justice of the case. We are not all, happily, victims of the literary aberration that led Charles Lamb to revive Elizabethanism as a modern cult. We forgive him his addiction to it as we forgive him his addiction to gin.

Unfortunately, Shakespeare dropped into the middle of these ruffianly pedants; and since there was no other shop than theirs to serve his apprenticeship in, he had perforce to become an Elizabethan too. In such a school of falsehood, bloody-mindedness, bombast and intellectual cheapness, his natural standard was inevitably dragged down, as we know to our cost; but the degree to which he dragged their standard up has saved them from oblivion. It makes one giddy to compare the execrable rottenness of the "Jew of Malta" with the humanity and poetry of "The Merchant of Venice." Hamlet, Othello, and Iago are masterpieces beside Faustus, Bussy d'Amboise, and Bosola. After Shakespeare, the dramatists were in the position of Spohr after Mozart. A ravishing secular art had been opened up to them, and was refining their senses and ennobling their romantic illusions and enthusiasms instead of merely stirring up their basest passions. Cultivated lovers of the beauties of Shakespeare's art — true amateurs, in fact — took the place of the Marlovian crew. Such amateurs, let loose in a field newly reaped by a great master, have always been able to glean some dropped ears, and even to raise a brief aftermath. In this way the world has gained many charming and fanciful, though not really original, works of art — blank verse dramas after Shakespeare, rhetorical frescoes after Raphael, fugues after Bach, operas after Mozart, symphonies after Beethoven, and so on. This, I take it, is the distinc-

tion between Marlowe and Company and the firm of Beaumont and Fletcher. The pair wrote a good deal that was pretty disgraceful; but at all events they had been educated out of the possibility of writing "Titus Andronicus." They had no depth, no conviction, no religious or philosophic basis, no real power or seriousness — Shakespeare himself was a poor master in such matters — but they were dainty romantic poets, and really humorous character-sketchers in Shakespeare's popular style: that is, they neither knew nor cared anything about human psychology, but they could mimic the tricks and manners of their neighbors, especially the vulgarer ones, in a highly entertaining way.

"The Coxcomb" is not a bad sample of their art. Mr. Poel has had to bowdlerize it in deference to the modesty of the barristers of the Inner Temple. For instance, Mercury's relations with Maria stop short of exacting her husband's crowning sacrifice to friendship; and when the three merry gentlemen make Riccardo too drunk to keep his appointment to elope with Viola, the purpose with which the four roysterers sally out into the street, much insisted on by Beaumont and Fletcher, is discreetly left to the guilty imagination of the more sophisticated spectators. With these exceptions the play was presented as fairly as could be expected.

The performance was one of the best the Elizabethan Stage Society has achieved. I confess that I anticipated failure in the part of Riccardo, who is not a human being, but an embodiment of the most delicate literary passion of Elizabethan romantic poetry. Miss Rehan, one felt, might have done something with it on the lines of her Viola in "Twelfth Night";

but then Miss Rehan was not available. The lady who was available did not allow her name to appear in the bill; and I have no idea who she is. But she certainly hit that part off to perfection, having, by a happy temperamental accident, the musical root of the poetic passion in her. Her performance was apparently quite original. There was no evidence in it of her ever having seen Miss Rehan act: if she suggested anybody, it was Calvé. Mr. Sherbrooke's Mercury also was an excellent performance. The vivacity of his pantomime, and a trick of pronouncing his *d*'s and *t*'s foreign fashion, with the tongue against the teeth, raised some doubt as to whether he was quite as English as his name; but his performance was none the worse. In delivering his asides he convinced me more than any of the rest that he had divined the method and style of the Elizabethan stage. I should like to say a special word about every one of the performers, but the programme reminds me that there are no less than twenty-four of them; so I can only add hastily that Mr. Poel himself played the Coxcomb; that Mr. Paget Bowman spoke the prologue and played Valerio; that the Justice was impersonated by Mr. J. H. Brewer, and not, as some supposed, by Sir Peter Edlin; that Miss Imogen Surrey played Viola and Miss Hepworth Valerio's mother; and that these and all the other parts, especially the tinker and his trull, and not forgetting Mr. Leonard Howard's Alexander, come out quite vividly and intelligibly. I have no doubt some of the audience were bored; but the explanation of that is simple: they were the people who have no taste for Elizabethan drama. After all, you cannot plunge into these things absolutely without connoisseurship.

SHAKESPEARE'S MERRY GENTLEMEN

Much Ado About Nothing. St. James's Theatre, 16 February, 1898.

"MUCH ADO" is perhaps the most dangerous actor-manager trap in the whole Shakespearean repertory. It is not a safe play like "The Merchant of Venice" or "As You Like It," nor a serious play like "Hamlet." Its success depends on the way it is handled in performance; and that, again, depends on the actor-manager being enough of a critic to discriminate ruthlessly between the pretension of the author and his achievement.

The main pretension in "Much Ado" is that Benedick and Beatrice are exquisitely witty and amusing persons. They are, of course, nothing of the sort. Benedick's pleasantries might pass at a sing-song in a public-house parlor; but a gentleman rash enough to venture on them in even the very mildest £52-a-year suburban imitation of polite society to-day would assuredly never be invited again. From his first joke, "Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?" to this last, "There is no staff more reverend than one tipped with horn," he is not a wit, but a blackguard. He is not Shakespeare's only failure in that genre. It took the Bard a long time to grow out of the provincial conceit that made him so fond of exhibiting his accomplishments as a master of gallant badinage. The very thought of Biron, Mercutio, Gratiano and Benedick must, I hope, have covered him with shame in his later years. Even Hamlet's airy compliments to

Ophelia before the court would make a cabman blush. But at least Shakespeare did not value himself on Hamlet's indecent jests as he evidently did on those of the four merry gentlemen of the earlier plays. When he at last got conviction of sin, and saw this sort of levity in its proper light, he made masterly amends by presenting the blackguard *as* a blackguard in the person of Lucio in "Measure for Measure." Lucio, as a character study, is worth forty Benedicks and Birons. His obscenity is not only inoffensive, but irresistibly entertaining, because it is drawn with perfect skill, offered at its true value, and given its proper interest, without any complicity of the author in its lewdness. Lucio is much more of a gentleman than Benedick, because he keeps his coarse sallies for coarse people. Meeting one woman, he says humbly, "Gentle and fair: your brother kindly greets you. Not to be weary with you, he 's in prison." Meeting another, he hails her sparkingly with "How now? which of your hips has the more profound sciatica?" The one woman is a lay sister, the other a prostitute. Benedick or Mercutio would have cracked their low jokes on the lay sister, and been held up as gentlemen of rare wit and excellent discourse for it. Whenever they approach a woman or an old man, you shiver with apprehension as to what brutality they will come out with.

Precisely the same thing, in the tenderer degree of her sex, is true of Beatrice. In her character of professed wit she has only one subject, and that is the subject which a really witty woman never jests about, because it is too serious a matter to a woman to be made light of without indelicacy. Beatrice jests about it for the sake of the indelicacy. There is only one

thing worse than the Elizabethan "merry gentleman," and that is the Elizabethan "merry lady."

Why is it then that we still want to see Benedick and Beatrice, and that our most eminent actors and actresses still want to play them? Before I answer that very simple question let me ask another. Why is it that Da Ponte's "dramma giocosa," entitled "Don Giovanni," a loathsome story of a coarse, witless, worthless libertine, who kills an old man in a duel and is finally dragged down through a trapdoor to hell by his twaddling ghost, is still, after more than a century, as "immortal" as "Much Ado"? Simply because Mozart clothed it with wonderful music, which turned the worthless words and thoughts of Da Ponte into a magical human drama of moods and transitions of feeling. That is what happened in a smaller way with "Much Ado." Shakespeare shows himself in it a common-place librettist working on a stolen plot, but a great musician. No matter how poor, coarse, cheap and obvious the thought may be, the mood is charming, and the music of the words expresses the mood. Paraphrase the encounters of Benedick and Beatrice in the style of a blue-book, carefully preserving every idea they present, and it will become apparent to the most infatuated Shakespearean that they contain at best nothing out of the common in thought or wit, and at worst a good deal of vulgar naughtiness. Paraphrase Goethe, Wagner or Ibsen in the same way, and you will find original observation, subtle thought, wide comprehension, far-reaching intuition and serious psychological study in them. Give Shakespeare a fairer chance in the comparison by paraphrasing even his best and maturest work, and you will still get nothing more than the platitudes of

proverbial philosophy, with a very occasional curiosity in the shape of a rudiment of some modern idea, not followed up. Not until the Shakespearean music is added by replacing the paraphrase with the original lines does the enchantment begin. Then you are in another world at once. When a flower-girl tells a coster to hold his jaw, for nobody is listening to him, and he retorts, "Oh, you 're there, are you, you beauty?" they reproduce the wit of Beatrice and Benedick exactly. But put it this way. "I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you." "What! my dear Lady Disdain, are you yet living?" You are miles away from costerland at once. When I tell you that Benedick and the coster are equally poor in thought, Beatrice and the flower-girl equally vulgar in repartee, you reply that I might as well tell you that a nightingale's love is no higher than a cat's. Which is exactly what I do tell you, though the nightingale is the better musician. You will admit, perhaps, that the love of the worst human singer in the world is accompanied by a higher degree of intellectual consciousness than that of the most ravishingly melodious nightingale. Well, in just the same way, there are plenty of quite second-rate writers who are abler thinkers and wits than William, though they are unable to weave his magic into the expression of their thoughts.

It is not easy to knock this into the public head, because comparatively few of Shakespeare's admirers are at all conscious that they are listening to music as they hear his phrases turn and his lines fall so fascinatingly and memorably; whilst we all, no matter how stupid we are, can understand his jokes and platitudes, and are flattered when we are told of the

subtlety of the wit we have relished, and the profundity of the thought we have fathomed. Englishmen are specially susceptible to this sort of flattery, because intellectual subtlety is not their strong point. In dealing with them you must make them believe that you are appealing to their brains when you are really appealing to their senses and feelings. With Frenchmen the case is reversed: you must make them believe that you are appealing to their senses and feelings when you are really appealing to their brains. The Englishman, slave to every sentimental ideal and dupe of every sensuous art, will have it that his great national poet is a thinker. The Frenchman, enslaved and duped only by systems and calculations, insists on his hero being a sentimentalist and artist. That is why Shakespeare is esteemed a master-mind in England, and wondered at as a clumsy barbarian in France.

However indiscriminate the public may be in its Shakespeare worship, the actor and actress who are to make a success of "Much Ado" must know better. Let them once make the popular mistake of supposing that what they have to do is to bring out the wit of Benedick and Beatrice, and they are lost. Their business in the "merry" passages is to cover poverty of thought and coarseness of innuendo by making the most of the grace and dignity of the diction. The sincere, genuinely dramatic passages will then take care of themselves. Alas! Mr. Alexander and Miss Julia Neilson have made the plunge without waiting for my advice. Miss Neilson, throwing away all her grace and all her music, strives to play the merry lady by dint of conscientious gambolling. Instead of uttering her speeches as exquisitely as possible, she rattles through them, laying an impossible load of archness

on every insignificant conjunction, and clipping all the important words until there is no measure or melody left in them. Not even the wedding scene can stop her: after an indignant attitude or two she redoubles her former skittishness. I can only implore her to give up all her deep-laid Beatricisms, to discard the movements of Miss Ellen Terry, the voice of Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and the gaiety of Miss Kitty Loftus, and try the effect of Julia Neilson, in all her grave grace taken quite seriously. Mr. Alexander makes the same mistake, though, being more judicious than Miss Neilson, he does not carry it out so disastrously. His merry gentleman is patently a dutiful assumption from beginning to end. He smiles, rackets, and bounds up and down stairs like a quiet man who has just been rated by his wife for habitual dulness before company. It is all hopeless: the charm of Benedick cannot be realized by the spryness of the actor's legs, the flashing of his teeth, or the rattle of his laugh: nothing but the music of the words — above all, not their meaning — can save the part. I wish I could persuade Mr. Alexander that if he were to play the part exactly as he played Guy Domville, it would at once become ten times more fascinating. He should at least take the revelation of Beatrice's supposed love for him with perfect seriousness. The more remorsefully sympathetic Benedick is when she comes to bid him to dinner after he has been gulled into believing she loves him, the more exquisitely ridiculous the scene becomes. It is the audience's turn to laugh then, not Benedick's.

Of all Sir Henry Irving's manifold treasons against Shakespeare, the most audacious was his virtually cutting Dogberry out of "Much Ado." Mr. Alexander

does not go so far; but he omits the fifth scene of the third act, upon which the whole effect of the later scenes depends, since it is from it that the audience really gets Dogberry's measure. Dogberry is a capital study of parochial character. Sincerely played, he always comes out as a very real and highly entertaining person. At the St. James's, I grieve to say, he does not carry a moment's conviction: he is a mere mouthpiece for malapropisms, all of which he shouts at the gallery with intense consciousness of their absurdity, and with open anxiety lest they should pass unnoticed. Surely it is clear, if anything histrionic is clear, that Dogberry's first qualification must be a complete unconsciousness of himself as he appeals to others.

Verges, even more dependent than Dogberry on that cut-out scene with Leonato, is almost annihilated by its excision; and it was hardly worth wasting Mr. Esmond on the remainder.

When I have said that neither Benedick nor Beatrice has seen sufficiently through the weakness of Shakespeare's merriments to concentrate themselves on the purely artistic qualities of their parts, and that Dogberry is nothing but an excuse for a few laughs, I have made a somewhat heavy deduction from my praises of the revival. But these matters are hardly beyond remedy; and the rest is excellent. Miss Fay Davis's perfect originality contrasts strongly with Miss Neilson's incorrigible imitativeness. Her physical grace is very remarkable; and she creates her part between its few lines, as Hero must if she is to fill up her due place in the drama. Mr. Fred Terry is a most engaging Don Pedro; and Mr. H. B. Irving is a striking Don John, though he is becoming too accomplished an actor to make shift with that single smile which is as well

known at the St. James's by this time as the one wig of Mr. Pinero's hero was at "The Wells." Mr. Vernon and Mr. Beveridge are, of course, easily within their powers as Leonato and Antonio; and all the rest come off with credit — even Mr. Loraine, who has not a trace of Claudio in him. The dresses are superb, and the scenery very handsome, though Italy contains so many palaces and chapels that are better than handsome that I liked the open-air scenes best. If Mr. Alexander will only make up his mind that the piece is irresistible as poetry, and hopeless as epigrammatic comedy, he need not fear for its success. But if he and Miss Neilson persist in depending on its attempts at wit and gallantry, then it remains to be seen whether the public's sense of duty or its boredom will get the upper hand.

THE DRAMA IN HOXTON

9 April, 1898.

OF late, I am happy to say, the theatres have been so uneventful that I should have fallen quite out of the habit of my profession but for a certain vigorously democratic clergyman, who seized me and bore me off to the last night of the pantomime at "the Brit." The Britannia Theatre is in Hoxton, not far from Shoreditch Church, a neighborhood in which the "Saturday Review" is comparatively little read. The manager, a lady, is the most famous of all London managers. Sir Henry Irving, compared to her, is a mushroom, just as his theatre, compared to hers, is

a back drawing-room. Over 4000 people pay nightly at her doors; and the spectacle of these thousands, serried in the vast pit and empyrean gallery, is so fascinating that the stranger who first beholds it can hardly turn away to look at the stage. Forty years ago Mrs. Sara Lane built this theatre; and she has managed it ever since. It may be no such great matter to handle a single playhouse — your Irvings, Trees, Alexanders, Wyndhams, and other upstarts of yesterday can do that; but Mrs. Lane is said to own the whole ward in which her theatre stands. Madame Sarah Bernhardt's diamonds fill a jewel-box: Mrs. Lane's are reputed to fill sacks. When I had the honor of being presented to Mrs. Lane, I thought of the occasion when the late Sir Augustus Harris, her only serious rival in managerial fame, had the honor of being presented to me. The inferiority of the man to the woman was manifest. Sir Augustus was, in comparison, an hysterical creature. Enterprise was with him a frenzy which killed him when it reached a climax of success. Mrs. Lane thrives on enterprise and success, and is capable, self-contained, practical, vigilant, everything that a good general should be. A West End star is to her a person to whom she once gave so many pounds or shillings a week, and who is now, in glittering and splendid anxiety, begging for engagements, desperately wooing syndicates and potential backers, and living on Alnaschar dreams and old press notices which were unanimously favorable (if you excluded those which were obviously malignant personal attacks). Mrs. Lane, well furnished with realities, has no use for dreams; and she knows syndicates and capitalists only as suspicious characters who want her money, not as courted deities with powers of life and death in their

hands. The fortune of her productions means little to her: if the piece succeeds, so much the better: if not, the pantomime pays for all.

The clergyman's box, which was about as large as an average Metropolitan railway station, was approached from the stage itself; so that I had opportunities of criticizing both from before the curtain and behind it. I was struck by the absence of the worthless, heartless, incompetent people who seem to get employed with such facility — nay, sometimes apparently by preference — in West End theatres. The West End calculation for musical farce and pantomime appears to be that there is " a silver mine " to be made by paying several pounds a week to people who are worth nothing, provided you engage enough of them. This is not Mrs. Lane's plan. Mr. Bigwood, the stage-manager, is a real stage-manager, to whom one can talk on unembarrassed human terms as one capable man to another, and not by any means an erratic art failure from Bedford Park and the Slade School, or one of those beachcombers of our metropolitan civilization who drift to the West End stage because its fringe of short-lived ventures provide congenital liars and impostors with unique opportunities of drawing a few months' or weeks' salary before their preoccupied and worried employers have leisure to realize that they have made a bad bargain. I had not the pleasure of making the prompter's acquaintance; but I should have been surprised to find him the only person in the theatre who could not read, though in the West I should have expected to find that his principal qualification. I made my way under the stage to look at the working of the star-trap by which Mr. Lupino was flung up through the boards like a stone from a vol-

cano; and there, though I found eight men wasting their strength by overcoming a counterweight which, in an up-to-date French *théâtre de féerie* is raised by one man with the help of a pulley, the carpenter-machinist in command was at once recognizable as a well-selected man. On the stage the results of the same instinctive sort of judgment were equally apparent. The display of beauty was sufficiently voluptuous; but there were no good-for-nothings: it was a company of men and women, recognizable as fellow-creatures, and not as accidentally pretty cretinous freaks. Even the low comedians were not blackguards, though they were certainly not fastidious, Hoxton being somewhat Rabelaisian in its ideas of broad humor. One scene, in which the horrors of sea-sickness were exploited with great freedom, made the four thousand sons and daughters of Shoreditch scream with laughter. At the climax, when four voyagers were struggling violently for a single bucket, I looked stealthily round the box, in which the Church, the Peerage and the Higher Criticism were represented. All three were in convulsions. Compare this with our West End musical farces, in which the performers strive to make some inane scene "go" by trying to suggest to the starving audience that there is something exquisitely loose and vicious beneath the dreary fatuity of the surface. Who would not rather look at and laugh at four men pretending to be seasick in a wildly comic way than see a row of young women singing a chorus about being "Gaiety Girls" with the deliberate intention of conveying to the audience that a Gaiety chorister's profession — their own profession — is only a mask for the sort of life which is represented in Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square after midnight? I quite

agree with my friend the clergyman that decent ladies and gentlemen who have given up West End musical farce in disgust will find themselves much happier at the Britannia pantomime.

I shall not venture on any searching artistic criticism of "Will o' the Wisp," as the pantomime was called. If it were a West End piece, I should pitch into it without the slightest regard to the prestige and apparent opulence of the manager, not because I am incorruptible, but because I am not afraid of the mere shadow of success. I treat its substance, in the person of Mrs. Lane, with careful respect. Show me real capacity; and I bow lower to it than anybody. All I dare suggest to the Hoxtonians is that when they insist on an entertainment lasting from seven to close upon midnight, they have themselves to thank if the actors occasionally have to use all their ingenuity to spin out scenes of which a judicious playgoer would desire to have at least ten minutes less.

The enthusiasm of the pit on the last night, with no stalls to cut it off from the performers, was frantic. There was a great throwing of flowers and confectionery on the stage; and it would happen occasionally that an artist would overlook one of these tributes, and walk off, leaving it unnoticed on the boards. Then a shriek of tearing anxiety would arise, as if the performer were wandering blindfold into a furnace or over a precipice. Every factory girl in the house would lacerate the air with a mad scream of "Pick it up, Topsy!" "Pick it up, Voylit!" followed by a gasp of relief, several thousand strong, when Miss Topsy Sinden or Miss Violet Durkin would return and annex the offering. I was agreeably astonished by Miss Topsy Sinden's dancing. Thitherto it had been

my miserable fate to see her come on, late in the second act of some unspeakably dreary inanity at the West End, to interpolate a "skirt dance," and spin out the unendurable by the intolerable. On such occasions I have looked on her with cold hatred, wondering why the "varieties" of a musical farce should not include a few items from the conventional "assault-at-arms," culminating in some stalwart sergeant, after the usual slicing of lemons, leaden bars and silk handkerchiefs, cutting a skirt-dancer in two at one stroke. At the Britannia Miss Sinden really danced, acted, and turned out quite a charming person. I was not surprised; for the atmosphere was altogether more bracing than at the other end of the town. These poor playgoers, to whom the expenditure of half a guinea for a front seat at a theatre is as outrageously and extravagantly impossible as the purchase of a deer forest in Mars is to a millionaire, have at least one excellent quality in the theatre. They are jealous *for* the dignity of the artist, not derisively covetous of his (or her) degradation. When a white statue which had stood for thirteen minutes in the middle of the stage turned out to be Mr. Lupino, who forthwith put on a classic plasticity, and in a series of rapid poses claimed popular respect for "the antique," it was eagerly accorded; and his demon conflict with the powers of evil, involving a desperate broadsword combat, and the most prodigious plunges into the earth and projections therefrom by volcanic traps as aforesaid, was conducted with all the tragic dignity of Richard III and received in the true Aristotelean spirit by the audience. The fairy queen, a comely prima donna who scorned all frivolity, was treated with entire respect and seriousness. Altogether, I seriously recommend those of my

readers who find a pantomime once a year good for them, to go next year to the Britannia, and leave the West End to its boredoms and all the otherdoms that make it so expensively dreary.

Oh, these sentimental, second-sighted Scotchmen! Reader: would you like to see me idealized by a master hand? If you would, buy the "Sunday Special" of the 3rd instant, and study Mr. Robert Buchanan's open letter to me. There you will find the ideal G. B. S. in "the daring shamelessness of a powerful and fearless nudity." This is the sort of thing that flatters a timid, sedentary literary man. Besides, it protects him: other people believe it all, and are afraid to hit the poor paper Titan. Far be it from me to say a word against so effective an advertisement; though when I consider its generosity I cannot but blush for having taken in so magnanimous an idealizer. Yet a great deal of it is very true: Mr. Buchanan is altogether right, it seems to me, in identifying my views with his father's Owenism; only I claim that Comte's law of the three stages has been operating busily since Owen's time, and that modern Fabianism represents the positive stage of Owenism. I shall not plead against the highly complimentary charge of impudence in its proper sense of shamelessness. Shame is to the man who fights with his head what cowardice is to the man who fights with his hands: I have the same opinion of it as Bunyan put into the mouth of Faithful in the Valley of Humiliation. But I do not commit myself to Mr. Buchanan's account of my notions of practical reform. It is true that when I protest against our marriage laws, and Mr. Buchanan seizes the occasion to observe that "the idea of marriage, spiritually speaking, is absolutely beautiful and ennobling," I feel

very much as if a Chinese mandarin had met my humanitarian objection to starving criminals to death or cutting them into a thousand pieces, by blandly remarking that "the idea of evil-doing leading to suffering is, spiritually speaking, absolutely beautiful and ennobling." If Mr. Buchanan is content to be forbidden to spiritually ennoble himself except under legal conditions so monstrous and immoral that no disinterestedly prudent and self-respecting person would accept them when free from amorous infatuation, then I am not. Mr. Buchanan's notion that I assume that "marriage is essentially and absolutely an immoral bargain between the sexes in so far as it conflicts with the aberrations and caprices of the human appetite," is a wildly bad shot. What on earth has marriage to do with the aberrations and caprices of human appetite? People marry for companionship, not for debauchery. Why that wholesome companionship should be a means of making amiable and honest people the helpless prey of drunkards, criminals, pestiferous invalids, bullies, viragoes, lunatics, or even persons with whom, through no fault on either side, they find it impossible to live happily, I cannot for the life of me see; and if Mr. Buchanan can, I invite him to give his reasons. Can any sane person deny that a contract "for better, for worse" destroys all moral responsibility? And is it not a revolting and indecent thing that any indispensable social contract should compulsorily involve a clause, abhorrent to both parties if they have a scrap of honor in them, by which the persons of the parties are placed at each other's disposal by legal force? These abominations may not belong to "the idea of marriage, spiritually speaking"; but they belong to the fact of marriage, prac-

tically speaking; and it is with this fact that I, as a Realist (Mr. Buchanan's own quite correct expression), am concerned. If I were to get married myself, I should resort to some country where the marriage law is somewhat less than five centuries out of date; and as this seems to me as unreasonable a condition for the ordinary man as a trip to Bayreuth is to the ordinary gallery opera-goer, I do what I can to relieve him of it, and make married people as responsible for their good behavior to one another as business partners are. Hereupon Mr. Buchanan discourses in the following terms: — "The Naked Man (me!) posing as a realist, cries, 'away with sanctions! let us have no more of them'; but the man who is clothed and in his right mind knows that they are inevitable and accepts them." Did any one ever hear such nonsense? Do the Americans accept them? Do the French accept them? Would we accept them but for our national preference for hypocrisy eked out with collusive divorce cases? I have no objection to Mr. Buchanan idealizing me; but when he takes to idealizing the English law at its stupidest, he oversteps my drawn line. I am none the less obliged to him for giving me an excuse for another assault on these patent beautifiers and ennoblers without which, it is assumed, we should all fall to universal rapine, though the danger of license is plainly all the other way. I verily believe that if the percentage of happy marriages ever rises to, say, twenty-five, the existence of the human intellect will be threatened by the very excesses against which our marriage law is supposed to protect us.

MR. CHARLES FROHMAN'S MISSION

The Heart of Maryland: a drama in four acts. By David Belasco. Adelphi Theatre, 9 April, 1898.

AFTER "The Heart of Maryland," at the Adelphi, I begin to regard Mr. Charles Frohman as a manager with a great moral mission. We have been suffering of late years in England from a wave of blackguardism. Our population is so large that even its little minorities of intellectual and moral dwarfs form a considerable body, and can make an imposing noise, so long as the sensible majority remain silent, with its clamor for war, for "empire," for savage sports, savage punishments, flogging, duelling, prize-fighting, 144 hours' bicycle races, national war dances to celebrate the cautious pounding of a few thousand barbarians to death with machine projectiles, followed by the advance of a whole British brigade on the wretched survivors under "a withering fire" which kills twenty-three men, and national newspaper paragraphs in which British heroes of the rank and file, who will be flung starving on our streets in a year or two at the expiration of their short service, proudly describe the sport of village-burning, remarking, with a touch of humorous cockney reflectiveness, on the amusing manner in which old Indian women get "fairly needled" at the spectacle of their houses and crops being burnt, and mentioning with honest pride how their officers were elated and satisfied with the day's work. My objection to this sort of folly is by no means purely humanitarian. I am quite prepared to waive the humanitarian point altogether, and

to accept, for the sake of argument, the position that we must destroy or be destroyed. But I do not believe in the destructive force of a combination of descriptive talent with delirium tremens. I do not feel safe behind a rampart of music-hall enthusiasm: on the contrary, the mere thought of what these poor, howling, half-drunk patriots would do if the roll of a hostile drum reached their ears, brings out a cold sweat of pity and terror on me. Imagine going to war, as the French did in 1870, with a stock of patriotic idealism and national enthusiasm instead of a stock of military efficiency. The Dervishes have plenty of racial idealism and enthusiasm, with religious fanaticism and personal hardihood to boot; and much good it has done them! What would have happened to them if they had been confronted by the army of the future is only conceivable because, after all, the limit of possibility is annihilation, which is conceivable enough. I picture that future army to myself dimly as consisting of half-a-dozen highly-paid elderly gentlemen provided with a picnic-basket and an assortment of implements of wholesale destruction. Depend upon it, its first meeting with our hordes of Continental enslaved conscripts and thriftless English " surplus population," disciplined into combining all the self-helplessness of machinery with the animal disadvantages of requiring food and being subject to panic, and commanded by the grown-up boyishness for which the other professions have no use, will be the death of military melodrama. It is quite clear, at all events, that the way out of the present militaristic madness will be found by the first nation that takes war seriously, or, as the melodramatizers of war will say, cynically. It has always been so. The fiery Rupert, charging

for God and the King, got on excellently until Cromwell, having some experience as a brewer, made the trite experiment of raising the wages of the Parliamentary soldier to the market value of respectable men, and immediately went over Rupert like a steam-roller. Napoleon served out enthusiasm, carefully mixed with prospects of loot, as cold-bloodedly as a pirate captain serves out rum, and never used it as an efficient substitute for facts and cannon. Wellington, with his characteristic Irish common sense, held a steadfast opinion of the character of the average British private and the capacity of the average British officer which would wreck the Adelphi Theatre if uttered there; but he fed them carefully, and carried our point with them against the enemy. At the present time, if I or any one else were to propose that enough money should be spent on the British soldier to make him an efficient marksman, to attract respectable and thrifty men to the service, to escape the necessity for filling the ranks with undersized wasters and pretending to believe the glaring lies as to their ages which the recruiting-sergeant has to suggest to them, and to abolish the military prison with its cat-o'-nine-tails perpetually flourishing before our guardsmen in Gibraltar "fortress orders" and the like, there would be a howl of stingy terror from the very taxpayers who are now weeping with national enthusiasm over the heroism of the two Dargai pipers who, five years hence, will probably be cursing, in their poverty, the day they ever threw away their manhood on the British War Office.

The question for the dramatic critic is, how is it possible to knock all this blood-and-thunder folly out of the head of all the British playgoer? Satire would be

useless: sense still more out of the question. Mr. Charles Frohman seems to me to have solved the problem. You cannot make the Britisher see that his own bunkum is contemptible. But show him the bunkum of any other nation, and he sees through it promptly enough. And that is what Mr. Frohman is doing. "The Heart of Maryland" is an American melodrama of the Civil War. As usual, all the Southern commanders are Northern spies and all the Northern commanders Southern spies — at least that is the general impression produced. It may be historically correct; for obviously such an arrangement, when the troops once got used to it, would not make the smallest difference; since a competition for defeat, if earnestly carried out on both sides, would be just as sensible, just as exciting, just as difficult, just as well calculated to call forth all the heroic qualities, not to mention the Christian virtues, as a competition for victory. Maryland Cawlvert (spelt Calvert) is "a Southern woman to the last drop of her blood," and is, of course, in love with a Northern officer, who has had the villain drummed out of the Northern army for infamous conduct. The villain joins the Southerns, who, in recognition no doubt of his high character and remarkable record, at once make him a colonel, especially as he is addicted to heavy drinking. Naturally, he is politically impartial, and, as he says to the hysterical Northerner (who is, of course, the hero of the piece), fights for his own hand. "But the United States!" pleads the hysterical one feebly. "Damn the United States," replies the villain. Instantly the outraged patriot assaults him furiously, shouting, "Take back that. Take it back." The villain prudently takes it back; and the honor of

America is vindicated. This is clearly the point at which the audience should burst into frantic applause. No doubt American audiences do. Perhaps the Adelphi audience would too if the lines were altered to "Damn the United Kingdom." But we are sensible enough about other people's follies; and the incontinent schoolboyishness of the hero is received with the coolest contempt. This, then, is the moral mission of Mr. Charles Frohman. He is snatching the fool's cap from the London playgoer and showing it to him on the head of an American. Meanwhile, our foolish plays are going to America to return the compliment. In the end, perhaps, we shall get melodramas in which the heroism is not despicable, puerile and blackguardly, nor the villainy mere mechanical criminality.

For the rest, "The Heart of Maryland" is not a bad specimen of the American machine-made melodrama. The actors know the gymnastics of their business, and work harder and more smartly, and stick to it better than English actors. Mrs. Leslie Carter is a melodramatic heroine of no mean powers. Her dresses and graces and poses cast a glamor of American high art on Mr. Belasco's romance; and her transports and tornadoes, in which she shows plenty of professional temperament and susceptibility, give intensity to the curtain situations, and secure her a flattering series of recalls. She disdains the silly and impossible sensation scene with the bell, leaving it to a lively young-lady athlete, who shows with every muscle in her body that she is swinging the bell instead of being swung by it. Mr. Morgan, as the villain, is received with special favor; and Mr. Malcolm Williams pretends to be a corpse in such a life-like manner that he

brings down the house, already well disposed to him for his excellent acting before his decease. Nobody else has much of a chance.

THE DRAMA PURIFIED

The Conquerors: a drama in four acts. By Paul M. Potter. St. James's Theatre, 14 April, 1898.

WHEN civilisation becomes effete, the only cure is an irruption of barbarians. When the London dramatist has driven everybody out of the theatre with his tailor-made romances and suburban love affairs, the bushranger and the backwoodsman become masters of the situation. These outlandish people have no grace of language or subtlety of thought. Their women are either boyishly fatuous reproductions of the beautiful, pure, ladylike, innocent, blue-eyed, golden-haired divinities they have read about in obsolete novels, or scandalous but graphic portraits of female rowdies drawn from the life. Their heroes are criminals and hard drinkers, redeemed, in an extremely unconvincing manner, by their loves for the divinities aforesaid. Their humor is irreverent and barbarous; and their emotional stock-in-trade contains nothing but the commonest passions and cupidities, with such puerile points of honor as prevail among the men who are outcasts where civilization exists, and "pioneers" where it does not. All the same, these bush-whacking melodramatists have imagination, appetite, and heat of blood; and these qualities, suddenly asserting themselves in our exhausted theatre, produce the effect of a stiff tumbler of punch after the fiftieth water-

ing of a pot of tea. Being myself a teetotaller, with a strong taste for the water of life, their punch has no charms for me; but I cordially admit its superiority to the tea-leaf infusion; and I perceive that it will wake up the native dramatist, and teach him that if he does not take the trouble to feel and to invent, and even to think and to know, he will go under, and his place be taken by competitors whose more appropriate function in literature would appear to be the production of interminable stories of adventure in weekly numbers as a bait for the pennies of Schoolboard children.

It is quite impossible, in view of the third and fourth acts of "The Conquerors," to treat it with any sort of serious respect, even as a melodrama. And yet it produced what very few plays at the St. James's produce: that is, a strong illusion that we were looking at the persons and events of Mr. Potter's story, and not merely at our friends Mr. Alexander, Miss Neilson, and party, in their newest summer costumes. At the end of the first act, a gentleman in the audience so completely forgot Mr. Alexander's identity, that he got up and indignantly remonstrated with him for the blackguardism with which he was behaving in the character of "the Babe." The incident which produced this triumph was, it is true, borrowed from Guy de Maupassant; but the realistic vigor and brutality of the expression was Mr. Potter's.

The second act of the play may be taken as the reply of the Censorship to Mr. Heinemann's charges of illiberality. It culminates in a long, detailed, and elaborate preparation by the hero for a rape on the person of the heroine. After a frantic scene of ineffectual efforts to escape, with prayers for mercy, screams for help, and blood-curdling hysteria, the lady faints. The

gentleman then observes that he is a blackguard, and takes himself off. Now it is to be noted, that if he had been represented as having effected his purpose, the Lord Chamberlain would have refused to license the play. The present arrangement entertains the public with just as much of a rape as it is possible to present on the stage at all, Censorship or no Censorship. But the scene is supposed to be "purified" by a formal disclaimer, after all that is possible in stage libertinage has been done. The subsequent developments are as follows. When the lady comes to, and finds herself alone, she concludes that the man has actually carried out his threat. Under this impression she raves through two acts in a frenzy of passion which is half murderous and half incipiently affectionate. The mere imagination of the rape has produced what I may politely call a physiological attachment on the part of the victim. So she first plunges a knife into the hero, and then, in a transport of passionate remorse, carries him off to her bedroom to nurse him back to life. When her brother — to whom she is supposed to be devoted — has to make his escape either through this bedroom or through a garden where there is a sharpshooter behind every tree waiting to kill him, she unhesitatingly sends him through the garden, lest he should discover and shoot her ravisher. Finally, she learns that the ravisher is "innocent," and has been redeemed by her love; on which edifying situation they fall into one another's arms, and make a happy ending of it.

Now I do not object to the representation of all this if the public want to see it represented; but I do want to know whether were we to abolish not only the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction, but also the ordinary legal remedies against the abuse of such freedom as the

Press enjoys any dramatist, however viciously or voluptuously disposed, could go further than Mr. Potter in the direction which the Censorship is supposed to bar? The truth is, that at the point reached three minutes before the fall of the curtain on the second act of "The Conquerors," the only possible way of making the play acceptable to an audience which is at all scrupulous is to allow the drunken blackguard to commit the crime, and then mercilessly work out the consequences in the sequel. The Lord Chamberlain's formula is about as effective a safeguard of morality as a deathbed repentance. However excellent its intention may be, it operates as an official passport for licentiousness. It does not prevent the exhibition at the St. James's Theatre of sensational sexuality, brutality, drunkenness, and murder; but it takes care that all these things shall end happily, charmingly, respectably, prettily, lady-and-gentlemanlikely for all parties concerned. And on these conditions it relieves the public, and the managers, and the actors, and the audience, of all sense of responsibility in the matter. The relief appears cheap at two guineas, but as it unfortunately involves the prohibition of an honest treatment of the theme, and suppresses the moral influence of Ibsen and Tolstoi in the interest of Mr. Potter and the authors of pieces like "A Night Out" and "Gentleman Joe," it is perfectly clear to me that it would pay the nation very well indeed to commute the expectations of the Lord Chamberlain and Mr. Redford for a lump sum, buy their office from the Queen, and abolish the whole Censorship as a pestiferous sham which makes the theatre a plague-spot in British art.

"The Conquerors" is not a difficult play to act;

and the St. James's Company has no difficulty in producing an impression of brilliant ability in it, with the single exception of Miss Julia Neilson, who only compromises her dignity and throws away her charm by attempting this tearing, screaming, sensational melodramatic business. Mr. Alexander, having at last got hold of a part which has some brute reality about it (until the Lord Chamberlain intervenes), plays strongly and successfully; and Mr. Fred Terry creates so much interest by his appearances as the noble brother in the first two acts that the subsequent petering out of his part is highly exasperating. Miss Fay Davis, dividing the comic relief with Mr. Esmond, is in the last degree fascinating; Mr. Irving condescends to murder and corduroys with his usual glamor; Mr. Bertram Wallis sings the "Erl King"; Mr. Vernon is a gruff general; Mr. Beveridge, a whiskered major; Mr. Loraine, a nobody (a little wasteful, this); Miss Constance Collier, a handsome and vindictive Chouan woman, who could not possibly have been born and bred anywhere but in London; and Miss Victor is brought on expressly to make her age, sex, and talent ridiculous, a vulgar outrage which the audience, to its great credit, refuses to tolerate. As usual at the St. James's, the mounting is excellent, and the stage management thoroughly well carried out; but Mr. Alexander, it seems to me, has not yet noticed that these barbarian melodramas, with their profusion of action and dialogue, do not require, and in fact will not bear, the long silences which are necessary in order to give a stale, scanty, London-made play an air of having something in it, even if that something has to be manufactured between the lines out of impressive listenings, posing, grimacings, and "business." If Mr. Alexander will

take a look at the Americans at the Adelphi, he will see that they talk straight on, losing as little time as possible. There is none of the usual English attempt to get the acting in between the lines instead of on the lines. They know better than to give the audience time to think.

KATE TERRY

The Master: an original comedy in three acts. By G. Stuart Ogilvie. Globe Theatre, 23 April, 1898.
Lord and Lady Algy: an original light comedy in three acts. By R. C. Carton. Comedy Theatre, 21 April, 1898.

I MUST say Mr. Stuart Ogilvie has an odd notion of how to write a part to suit a particular actor. Here is Mr. Hare, one of the very few English actors one dare send a foreigner to see, excelling in the representation of all sorts and conditions of quick, clear, crisp, shrewd, prompt, sensible men. Enter to him Mr. Ogilvie, with a part expressly designed to show that all this is nothing but a pig-headed affectation, and that the true humanity beneath it is the customary maudlin, muzzy, brainless, hysterical sentimentality and excitability which is supposed to touch the heart of the British playgoer, and which, no doubt, does affect him to some extent when he induces in himself the necessary degree of susceptibility with a little alcohol. What a situation! And it would have been so easy to provide Mr. Hare with a part showing the worth and dignity of his own temperament! All through "The Master" Mr. Ogilvie seems to be trying to prove to

Mr. Hare what a much finer and more genuine fellow he would have been if nature had made him a Charles Warner or a Henry Neville. Apart from the point being an extremely debatable one, it seems hardly quite polite to Mr. Hare, who, after all, cannot help being himself. This comes of an author making no serious attempt to get to the point of view of the character he professes to have dramatized — of simply conspiring with the stupid section of the pit to make an Aunt Sally of it. Half the play might be made plausible if "The Master" were played as a savage, iron-jawed, madly selfish old brute; but the other half is evidently laid out for Mr. Hare's refinement and humanity of style. And then there is a revolting obviousness about the operations of destiny with a view to a happy ending. The old gentleman first puts his son out of the house, then puts out his daughter, and finally puts out his wife, whereupon the servants leave of their own accord. Immediately, with a punctuality and perfect expectedness which is about as dramatic as the response of a box of vestas to a penny in the slot, comes the winning of the Victoria Cross in India by the disinherited son, the heroic rescue of a band of entombed miners by the manly young husband for whose sake the daughter defies her father, and the sacrifice by the discarded wife of her whole fortune to save her oppressor from ruin. For a man of Mr. Ogilvie's calibre I call this gross. It is not the fine art of the dramatist: it is the trade of the playwright, and not even a first-class jog at that. For the life of me I cannot see why Mr. Ogilvie should thus aim at rank commonness in his drama any more than at the rank illiteracy of expression which usually accompanies it, and which he saves his play from absolute intoler-

ableness by avoiding. He may reply that the public like rank commonness. That may be, when it comes from the man to whom it is natural, and who, in doing it, is doing his best. But whether the public will like it from Mr. Ogilvie remains to be seen. Miss Marie Corelli's novels may be more widely read within a month of their publication than Mr. Meredith's used to be; but it does not at all follow that if Mr. Meredith were deliberately to try to do Miss Corelli's work the result would be popular. The public does not like to see a man playing down; and I should insult Mr. Ogilvie most fearfully if I were to assume that he was doing his best in "The Master." When, after stooping to a baby, he took the final plunge with a band playing "Soldiers of our Queen" to a cheering crowd outside, I hid my face and heard no more.

The interest of the occasion was strongly helped out by the reappearance of Miss Kate Terry, an actress unknown, except as an assiduous playgoer, to the present generation. Miss Terry entered apologetically, frankly taking the position of an elderly lady who had come to look after her daughter, and tacitly promising to do her best not to be intrusive, nor to make any attempt at acting or anything of that sort, if the audience would only be a little indulgent with her. She sat down on a sofa, looking very nice and kindly; but the moment she had to say something to Mr. Hare her old habits got the better of her, and the sentence was hardly out of her mouth before she recognized, as its cadence struck her ear, that she had acted it, and acted it uncommonly well. The shame of this discovery made her nervous; but the more nervous she was, the less she could help acting; and the less she could help acting, the more she put on the youth of

the time when she had last acted — a fearful indiscretion. However, as the audience, far from taking it in bad part, evidently wanted more of it, Miss Terry, after a brief struggle, abandoned herself to her fate and went recklessly for her part. It was not much of a part; but she gave the audience no chance of finding that out. She apparently began, in point of skill and practice, just where she had left off years ago, without a trace of rust. Her first two or three speeches, though delicately distinct, had a certain privacy of pitch, I thought; but almost before I had noticed it, it vanished, as she recaptured the pitch of the theatre and the ear of the crowded audience. She has distinguished skill, infallible judgment, altogether extraordinary amenity of style, and withal a quite enchanting air of being a simple-minded motherly lady, who does not mean to be clever in the least, and never was behind the scenes in a theatre in her life. I sometimes dream that I am on a concert platform with a violin in my hands and an orchestra at my back, having in some inexplicable madness undertaken to play the Brahms Concerto before a full audience without knowing my G string from my chanterelle. Whoever has not dreamt this dream does not know what humility means. Trembling and desperate, I strike Joachim's attitude, and find, to my amazement, that the instrument responds instantly to my sense of the music, and that I am playing away like anything. Miss Terry's acting reminds me of my imaginary violin-playing: she seems utterly innocent of it, and yet there it is, all happening infallibly and delightfully. But depend on it, she must know all about it; for how else does her daughter, Miss Mabel Terry, come to be so cunningly trained? She has walked on to the stage

with a knowledge of her business, and a delicacy in its execution, to which most of our younger leading ladies seem no nearer than when they first blundered on to the boards in a maze of millinery and professional ignorance. Yes: the daughter gives the apparent naïveté of the mother away: if that art were an accident of Nature it could never be taught so perfectly. Indeed, there were plenty of little revelations of this kind for sharp eyes. I have already described how Miss Kate Terry's momentary nervousness at first threw her back to the acting of thirty years ago. In that moment one saw how much of the original Kate Terry her daughter had just been reproducing for us. Then Miss Terry recovered her self-possession and her own age; and here again one saw that she was by no means going to be the maidenly Kate Terry with a matronly face and figure, but virtually a new actress of matronly parts, unsurpassed in stage accomplishment, and with a certain charm of temperament that will supply our authors with something that they get neither from the dazzling cleverness of Mrs. Kendal nor the conviction and comic force of Mrs. Calvert, who alone can lay claim to anything approaching her technical powers. I do not feel sure that Miss Terry could play Mrs. Alving in "Ghosts" as Mrs. Theodore Wright plays it — if, indeed, she could bring herself to play it at all — but I am sure that her art will not fail her in any play, however difficult, that does not positively antagonize her sympathies.

Stage art, even of a highly cultivated and artificial kind, sits so naturally on the Terrys that I dare say we shall hear a great deal about the family charm and very little about the family skill. Even Miss Ellen Terry, whose keenness of intelligence is beyond all

dissimulation, has often succeeded in making eminent critics believe that her stagecraft and nervous athleticism are mere efflorescences of her personal charm. But Miss Mabel Terry has no special enchantments to trade upon — only the inevitable charms of her age. She is not recognizably her aunt's niece. She is not majestically handsome and graceful like Miss Julia Neilson; nor voluptuously lovely like Miss Lily Hanbury; nor perilously bewitching like Mrs. Patrick Campbell. But she can speak beautifully, without the slightest trick or mannerism of any sort; and no moment of nervousness can disable her: the word gets rightly touched even when she can hardly hear it herself. She never makes a grimace, nor is there a trace of consciousness or exaggeration about her gestures. She played between her mother and Mr. Hare without being technically outclassed. Most of our stage young ladies would have sustained the comparison like an understudy volunteered in a desperate emergency by the nearest amateur. If we are to write this down as the family charm, let us not forget that it is a charm which includes a good deal of industriously acquired skill. It ought to be called artistic conscience.

Mr. Gilbert Hare is condemned to his usual premature gray hairs. If he ever gets a chance as Romeo, I am convinced that, from mere force of habit, the first thing he will say to Juliet will be, "I have known your uncle close on fifty years. Your mother was a sweet, gentle lady, God bless her." There is only five minutes — more 's the pity — of Mr. Kerr. His Major Hawkwood is a younger brother of Baron Croodle, whose second coming, by the way, ought to be at hand by this time. Mr. Gillmore and Mr. Cherry as the two heroes, and Mr. Rock as the butler, leave

nothing to be desired except less obvious parts for them. Mr. Ross struck me as not quite plausible enough in his villainy for the favorite of so exacting a principal as The Master.

" Lord and Lady Algy " at the Comedy is an ignoble, but not unamusing, three-act farce. I should have nothing more to say about it had my eye not been caught by the astounding epithet " wholesome " applied to it. I declare that it is the most immoral play I ever saw. Lord and Lady Algy are a middle-aged pair more completely and shamelessly void of self-respect than any other couple for whom the theatre has ventured to claim sympathy. They have one resource, one taste, one amusement, one interest, one ambition, one occupation, one accomplishment; and that is betting on the turf. The " wholesomeness " consists of the woman's boast that though she flirts, she always " runs straight " — as if it mattered a straw to any human being whether she ran straight or not. A lady who is a gambler, a loafer, and a sponge, is not likely to have any motive of the smallest moral value for refraining from adultery. There are people who are beneath law-breaking as well as people who are above it; and Lord and Lady Algy are of that class. But the play is altogether too trivial and sportive to raise moral questions; and I laughed at its humors without scruple. Mr. Henry Ford's jockey was the best bit of character in the performance. Mr. Hawtrey, as the Duke of Marlborough at a fancy ball, harmlessly drunk, makes plenty of inoffensive fun; and he and Miss Compton have plenty of their popular and familiar business in the first and third acts. The other parts are really exasperating in view of the talent thrown away in them.

VAN AMBURGH REVIVED

The Club Baby: a farce in three acts. By Edward G. Knoblauch. Avenue Theatre, 28 April, 1898.
The Medicine Man: a melodramatic comedy in five acts. By H. D. Traill and Robert Hichens. Lyceum Theatre, 4 May, 1898.

"THE CLUB BABY" at the Avenue ought to have been called "The Stage Baby's Revenge." The utter worthlessness of the sentiment in which our actors and playgoers wallow is shown by their readiness to take an unfortunate little child who ought to be in bed, and make fun of it on the stage as callously as a clown at a country fair will make fun of a sucking pig. But at the Avenue the baby turns the tables on its exploiters. The play tumbled along on the first night in an undeservingly funny way until the end of the second act, when the baby was rashly brought on the stage. Then it was all over. It was not so much that the audience looked at the baby; for audiences, in their thoughtless moments, are stupid enough to look at anything without blushing. But that baby looked at the audience; and its gaze would have reclaimed a gang of convicts. The pained wonder and unfathomable sadness with which it saw its elders, from whom its childlike trust and reverence had expected an almost godlike dignity, profanely making fools of themselves with a string of ribald jests at its expense, came upon us as the crowing of the cock came upon Peter. We went out between the acts and drank heavily as the best available substitute for weeping bitterly. If even one man had had the

grace to hang himself I should still have some hopes of the British public. As it is, I merely beg the Home Secretary to ask the magistrate who is responsible for the appearance of this child on the stage on what grounds he went out of his way to permit it. We have been at the trouble of passing an Act of Parliament to forbid the commercial exploitation of children on the stage except in cases where the enforcement of the Act would banish from the theatre some masterpiece of dramatic art written before the passing of the Act. For instance, we did not wish to make "Richard III" impossible by unconditionally abolishing the little Duke of York, nor to suppress "A Doll's House" by depriving Nora Helmer of her children. But "The Club Baby" is a play newly written with the deliberate intention of doing precisely what the Act was passed to prevent. It is a play without merit enough of any sort to give it a claim to the most trivial official indulgence, much less the setting aside of an Act of Parliament in its interest. And yet a magistrate licenses the employment in it, not of a boy or girl, but actually of a child in arms who is handed about the stage until eleven o'clock at night. It is useless to appeal to playgoers, managers, authors and people of that kind in this matter. If the exhibition of a regiment of new-born babies would raise an extra laugh or draw half-a-guinea over its cost, that regiment of babies would be ordered and a play written round it with the greatest alacrity. But the Home Office is responsible for the prevention of such outrages. Sir Matthew White Ridley is at present receiving £5000 a year, partly at my expense, for looking after the administration of the laws regulating the employment of children. If a factory owner employed a child under the

specified age, or kept a "young person" at work ten minutes after the specified hour, Sir Matthew would be down on him like five thousand of brick. If the factory owner were to plead that his factory was producing goods of vital utility and the rarest artistic value, the plea would not be listened to for a moment. In the name of common sense, why are speculators in Club Babies and the like to enjoy illegal and anti-social privileges which are denied to manufacturers?

I have been invited to the Strand Theatre to a play called "The J. P." In the bill the following appears: "Charlie Vivian, Junior. By a Baby Three Months Old." What right has Mr. Edouin, the manager, to invite me to witness such an outrage?

I suggest to the Home Office that a rigid rule should be made against the licensing of children for any new entertainment whatsoever. With regard to old plays, a privileged list might be made of works of the "Richard III" order; but the licenses given under this list should be limited to specified parts: for example, the "Richard III" privilege should apply solely to the part of the Duke of York, and not be made an excuse for introducing a coronation scene with a procession of five-year-old infants strewing flowers. If it were once understood that applications for licenses outside this list would be refused as a matter of course, the present abuses would disappear without further legislation. I would remind my critical colleagues that about six years ago a sort of epidemic of child exhibition broke out at the theatres devoted to comic opera. I was a critic of music at that time; and I remember an opera at the Lyric Theatre in which a ballet of tiny Punchinellos was danced between eleven o'clock and midnight by a troop of infants in a sort

of delirium induced by the conflict between intense excitement and intense sleepiness. I vainly tried to persuade some of the most enlightened of my fellow-critics to launch the thunder of the press at this abomination. Unfortunately, having little children of their own, and having observed that a single night's private theatricals gave much innocent delight to their babies, they thought it was quite a charming thing that the poor little Punchinellos should have such fun every night for several months. Truly, as Talleyrand said, the father of a family is capable of anything. I was left to launch the little thunder I could wield myself; and the result, I am happy to say, was that the managers, including a well-known stage-manager since deceased, suffered so much anguish of mind from my criticisms, without any counterbalancing conviction that their pieces were drawing a farthing more with the children than they would have drawn without them, that they mended their ways. But of late the epidemic has shown signs of breaking out again. I therefore think it only fair to say that I also am quite ready to break out again, and that I hope by this time my colleagues have realized that their "bless-its-little-heart" patro-sentimentality is not publicism.

As to the performance of "The Club Baby," all I need to say is that a long string of popular comedians do their best with it, and that a Miss Clare Greet, whom I do not remember to have seen before, distinguishes herself very cleverly in the part of the country girl.

Now that Sir Henry Irving has taken to encouraging contemporary literature, it cannot be denied that he has set to work in a sufficiently original fashion. Mr. H. D. Traill is an academic literary gentleman who, like Schopenhauer, conceives the world as Will and the

intellectual representations by which Man strives to make himself conscious of his will; only Mr. Traill conceives these things in a professional mode, the will being to him not a Will to Live, but a Will to Write Books, and the process of making us conscious of these books by intellectual representations being simply reviewing. Some time in the eighties London rose up in revolt against this view. The New Journalism was introduced. Lawless young men began to write and print the living English language of their own day instead of the prose style of one of Macaulay's characters named Addison. They split their infinitives, and wrote such phrases as "a man nobody ever heard of" instead of "a man of whom nobody had ever heard," or more classical still, "a writer hitherto unknown." Musical critics, instead of reading books about their business and elegantly regurgitating their erudition, began to listen to music and distinguish between sounds; critics of painting began to look at pictures; critics of the drama began to look at something else besides the stage; and descriptive writers actually broke into the House of Commons, elbowing the reporters into the background, and writing about political leaders as if they were mere play-actors. The interview, the illustration and the cross-heading, hitherto looked on as American vulgarities impossible to English literary gentlemen, invaded all our papers; and, finally, as the climax and masterpiece of literary Jacobinism, the "Saturday Review" appeared with a signed article in it. Then Mr. Traill and all his generation covered their faces with their togas and died at the base of Addison's statue, which all the while ran ink. It is true that they got up and went home when the curtain fell; but they made no truce with

Jacobinism; and Mr. Traill fled into the fortress of the "Times," and hurled therefrom, under the defiant title of "Literature," a destructive mass of reviews and publishers' advertisements which caught me one morning in a railway carriage and nearly killed me. One of the Jacobins was Mr. Hichens. He paid me the compliment of following up the assault on Academicism on my old lines — those of musical criticism. He was well received by a revolutionary and licentious generation; but whatever circulation his novels and articles might achieve, it was not to be expected that Mr. Traill would ever consent to be seen speaking to him in the street. And yet Sir Henry Irving, in the calmest manner, seems to have ordered a play from the twain jointly. What is more, he has got it. I hardly know how to describe the result. I trace the theme of the piece to a story, well known to Mr. Traill's generation, of the lion-tamer Van Amburgh, who professed to quell the most ferocious animals, whether human or not, by the power of his eye alone. Challenged to prove this power on the person of a very rough-looking laborer, he approached the man and fixed a soul-searching gaze on him. The laborer soon evinced the greatest disquietude, became very red and self-conscious, and finally knocked Van Amburgh down, accompanying the blow with a highly garnished demand as to who he was staring at. In "The Medicine Man" we have Van Amburgh with the period of quelling contemplation extended to five acts, and including not only the laborer, Bill Burge, but also a beauteous maiden named Sylvia. One can understand the humorous insanity of such a story fascinating Mr. Hichens, and Mr. Traill chuckling secretly at having planted it on the young Jacobin as a new idea. I find

myself totally unable to take it seriously: it sends me into a paroxysm of laughter whenever I think of it. I wonder which of the two authors gave the muscular victim of Van Amburgh Tregenna the name of a very eminent contemporary pugilist, known affectionately to the fancy as the Coffee Cooler. If Mr. Burge should take the suggested portrait at all amiss, and should seek personal redress at the hands of the authors or the manager, one shudders at the possible consequences to literature and the stage.

There was infinite comedy in the first night of the play at the Lyceum. It lasted from eight to past eleven, and contained just matter enough for a half-hour pantomimic sketch by Mr. Martinetti. Sir Henry Irving, pleased by the lion-taming notion, was perfectly delighted with his part, and would evidently have willingly gone on impressing and mesmerizing his devoted company for three hours longer. Miss Ellen Terry, on the other hand, was quite aware of the appalling gratuitousness of his satisfaction. To save the situation she put forth all her enchantments, and so beglamored the play act by act that she forced the audience to accept Sylvia as a witching and pathetically lovely creation of high literary drama. The very anguish the effort caused her heightened the effect. When, after some transcendently idiotic speech that not even her art could give any sort of plausibility to, she looked desperately at us all with an expression that meant "Don't blame me: *I* did n't write it," we only recognized a touch of nature without interpreting it, and were ravished. Hand-in-hand with the innocently happy Sir Henry, she endured the curtain calls with a proud reticence which said to us plainly enough, "I will play this part for you unworthy people, since you have no

better use to make of me; but I will not pretend to like it," which was really hardly fair; for we were, as I have said, in a state of enchantment, and thought it all adorable. Mr. Mackintosh as Bill Burge is laboriously impossible. His Hogarthian make-up is not like anything now discoverable at the docks; his dialect has no touch of the East End in it; he is as incapable of walking out of a room naturally as a real dock laborer is of "doing an exit." However, it does not matter much; the whole business is such utter nonsense that a stagey dock laborer is quite in keeping with the freakish humors of Mr. Hichens, to whom the life of the poor is a tragic-comic phantasmagoria with a good deal of poker and black eye in it. Only at a West End theatre could such a picture pass muster. Some of it — the humors of Mrs. Burge, for instance — is an outrage on humanity. But Mr. Hichens will retrieve "The Medicine Man" easily enough, for he has by no means mistaken his vocation in writing for the stage, though he had better avoid collaboration with the chartered dulness of academic history and the solemn frivolity of academic literature. It would take ten years' hard descriptive reporting for the "Star" or "Daily Mail" to teach Mr. Traill to observe life and to write seriously. The first tinker he meets will tell him a better ghost story than the vague figment, despicable to his own common sense, which he has thought good enough to make a theme for the most exacting of all the forms of literary art. That is your literary man all over — any old theme for a great occasion, provided only nobody can suspect you of believing in it.

G. B. S. VIVISECTED

14 May, 1898.

EUREKA! I have found it out at last. I now understand the British drama and the British actor. It has come about in this way.

A few weeks ago one of my feet, which had borne me without complaining for forty years, struck work. The spectacle of a dramatic critic hopping about the metropolis might have softened a heart of stone; but the managers, I regret to say, seized the opportunity to disable me by crowding a succession of first nights on me. After "The Medicine Man" at the Lyceum, the foot got into such a condition that it literally had to be looked into. I had no curiosity in the matter myself; but the administration of an anæsthetic made my views of no importance. It is to the anæsthetic that I owe the discovery which elicits my cry of Eureka!

The beginning of the anæsthesia threw no new light on the theatre. I was extinguished by the gas familiar to dentists' patients, and subsequently kept in a state of annihilation with ether. My last recollection is a sort of chuckle at being wideawake enough to know when the operator lifted my eyelid and tapped my eyeball to convince himself that he had made an end of me. It was not until I was allowed to recover that the process became publicly interesting. For then a very strange thing happened. *My character did not come back all at once.* Its artistic and sentimental side came first: its morality, its positive elements, its common sense, its incorrigible Protestant respectability, did not return for a long time after. For the first time in my life

I tasted the bliss of having no morals to restrain me from lying, and no sense of reality to restrain me from romancing. I overflowed with what people call "heart." I acted and lied in the most touchingly sympathetic fashion; I felt prepared to receive unlimited kindness from everybody with the deepest, tenderest gratitude; and I was totally incapable of even conceiving the notion of rendering any one a service myself. If only I could have stood up and talked distinctly as a man in perfect health and self-possession, I should have won the hearts of everybody present until they found me out later on. Even as it was, I was perfectly conscious of the value of my prostrate and half-delirious condition as a bait for sympathy; and I deliberately played for it in a manner which now makes me blush. I carefully composed effective little ravings, and repeated them, and then started again and let my voice die away, without an atom of shame. I called everybody by their Christian names, except one gentleman whose Christian name I did not know, and I called him "dear old So-and-so." Artistically, I was an immense success: morally, I simply had no existence.

At last they quietly extinguished the lights, and stole out of the chamber of the sweet invalid who was now sleeping like a child, but who, noticing that the last person to leave the room was a lady, softly breathed that lady's name in his dreams. Then the effect of the anæsthetic passed away more and more; and in less than an hour I was an honest taxpayer again, with my heart perfectly well in hand. And now comes the great question, Was that a gain or a loss? The problem comes home to me with special force at this moment, because I have just seriously distracted public attention from the American war by publishing my plays;

and I have been overwhelmed as usual by complaints of my want of heart, my unnaturally clear intellectual consciousness, my cynicism, and all the rest of it. One of my female characters, who drinks whisky, and smokes cigars, and reads detective stories, and regards the fine arts, especially music, as an insufferable and unintelligible waste of time, has been declared by my friend Mr. William Archer to be an exact and authentic portrait of myself, on no other grounds in the world except that she is a woman of business and not a creature of romantic impulse. In this "nation of shopkeepers," the critics no sooner meet a character on the stage with the smallest trace of business sagacity, or an author who makes the least allowance for the provident love of money and property as a guarantee of security, comfort and independence, which is so powerful a factor in English society, than they immediately declare such a character totally inhuman and unnatural, and such an author a cynical crank. If I am the unfortunate author, they dispose of the character at once as a mere dramatization of my own personal eccentricities.

This, regarded as one of the humors of natural self-unconsciousness, is so farcically paradoxical and preposterous that I have always felt it to be too coarse for the exquisite high comedy of real life. And I have been right. The protests come only from what we call the artistic class, by which contemptuous expression (for such it is in England) we mean the men and women who love books and pictures, histories and operas, and shrink from business and public affairs so persistently that in the end their consciousness becomes absolutely fictitious, in which condition reality seems unreal to them, and the most commonplace char-

acteristics of English life, when dramatized, produce on them the effect of a mere bizarrerie. When this effect is strong enough to give a serious jar to their artistic habits, they generally mistake the disagreeable sensation for a shock to their moral sense, it being one of their artistic conventions that it is possible to shirk real life, and yet possess moral sense.

Often as I have to point this out, I had, until yesterday, yet to realize fully the difference between observing it in other people and experiencing it oneself. At last I can speak of it at first hand; and now I understand it as I never understood it before. No longer shall I look at my sentimental, fiction-loving friends as Bismarck might look at a rather engaging South Sea chief; for I have actually changed personalities with them. What is more, I know how to reproduce the miracle at will as certainly as if I possessed the wishing-cap of Siegfried. My wishing-cap is a bag of ether. With that, I can first plunge into the darkness that existed before my birth and be simply nothing. Then I can come to life as an artist and a man of feeling — as everything that I have been reproached so bitterly for not being. I can prolong that condition indefinitely by taking a whiff or two of ether whenever I feel the chill of a moral or intellectual impulse. I can write plays in it; I can act in it; I can gush in it; I can borrow money to set myself up as an actor-manager in it; I can be pious and patriotic in it; I can melt touchingly over disease and death and murder and hunger and cold and poverty in it, turning all the woes of the world into artistic capital for myself; and finally I can come back to full consciousness and criticize myself as I was in it. The parable of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

will be fulfilled in me, with this difference, that it is Hyde who will be popular and petted, and Jekyll who will be rebuked for his callous, heartless cynicism. I have already ordered a set of cards inscribed " G. B. S. . .At Home. .Tuesdays and Fridays under ether for sentimental, theatrical and artistic purposes. .Mondays and Saturdays normal for business engagements and public affairs."

Here I must summarily break off. My doctor's investigation of my interior has disclosed the fact that for many years I have been converting the entire stock of energy extractable from my food (which I regret to say he disparages) into pure genius. Expecting to find bone and tissue, he has been almost wholly disappointed, and a pale, volatile moisture has hardly blurred the scalpel in the course of its excursions through my veins. He has therefore put it bluntly to me that I am already almost an angel, and that it rests with myself to complete the process summarily by writing any more articles before I have recovered from the effects of the operation and been renovated in the matter of bone and muscle. I have therefore pledged myself to send only the briefest line explaining why my article cannot appear this week. It is also essential, in order to keep up the sympathy which rages at my bedside, to make the very worst of my exhausted condition. Sad to say, there is enough of ether clinging round me still to keep me doing this with a very perceptible zest.

I can no more.

VALEDICTORY

21 May, 1898.

AS I lie here, helpless and disabled, or, at best, nailed by one foot to the floor like a doomed Strasburg goose, a sense of injury grows on me. For nearly four years — to be precise, since New Year 1895 — I have been the slave of the theatre. It has tethered me to the mile radius of foul and sooty air which has its centre in the Strand, as a goat is tethered in the little circle of cropped and trampled grass that makes the meadow ashamed. Every week it clamors for its tale of written words; so that I am like a man fighting a windmill: I have hardly time to stagger to my feet from the knock-down blow of one sail, when the next strikes me down. Now I ask, is it reasonable to expect me to spend my life in this way? For just consider my position. Do I receive any spontaneous recognition for the prodigies of skill and industry I lavish on an unworthy institution and a stupid public? Not a bit of it: half my time is spent in telling people what a clever man I am. It is no use merely doing clever things in England. The English do not know what to think until they are coached, laboriously and insistently for years, in the proper and becoming opinion. For ten years past, with an unprecedented pertinacity and obstination, I have been dinning into the public head that I am an extraordinarily witty, brilliant, and clever man. That is now part of the public opinion of England; and no power in heaven or on earth will ever change it. I may dodder and dote; I may potboil and platitudinize;

I may become the butt and chopping-block of all the bright, original spirits of the rising generation; but my reputation shall not suffer: it is built up fast and solid, like Shakespeare's, on an impregnable basis of dogmatic reiteration.

Unfortunately, the building process has been a most painful one to me, because I am congenitally an extremely modest man. Shyness is the form my vanity and self-consciousness take by nature. It is humiliating, too, after making the most dazzling displays of professional ability, to have to tell people how clever it all is. Besides, they get so tired of it, that finally, without dreaming of disputing the alleged brilliancy, they begin to detest it. I sometimes get quite frantic letters from people who feel that they cannot stand me any longer.

Then there are the managers. Are *they* grateful? No: they are simply forbearing. Instead of looking up to me as their guide, philosopher and friend, they regard me merely as the author of a series of weekly outrages on their profession and their privacy. Worse than the managers are the Shakespeareans. When I began to write, William was a divinity and a bore. Now he is a fellow-creature; and his plays have reached an unprecedented pitch of popularity. And yet his worshippers overwhelm my name with insult.

These circumstances will not bear thinking of. I have never had time to think of them before; but now I have nothing else to do. When a man of normal habits is ill, every one hastens to assure him that he is going to recover. When a Vegetarian is ill (which fortunately very seldom happens), every one assures him that he is going to die, and that they told him so,

and that it serves him right. They implore him to take at least a little gravy, so as to give himself a chance of lasting out the night. They tell him awful stories of cases just like his own which ended fatally after indescribable torments; and when he tremblingly inquires whether the victims were not hardened meat-eaters, they tell him he must not talk, as it is not good for him. Ten times a day I am compelled to reflect on my past life, and on the limited prospect of three weeks or so of lingering moribundity which is held up to me as my probable future, with the intensity of a drowning man. And I can never justify to myself the spending of four years on dramatic criticism. I have sworn an oath to endure no more of it. Never again will I cross the threshold of a theatre. The subject is exhausted; and so am I.

Still, the gaiety of nations must not be eclipsed. The long string of beautiful ladies who are at present in the square without, awaiting, under the supervision of two gallant policemen, their turn at my bedside, must be reassured when they protest, as they will, that the light of their life will go out if my dramatic articles cease. To each of them I will present the flower left by her predecessor, and assure her that there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. The younger generation is knocking at the door; and as I open it there steps spritely in the incomparable Max.

For the rest, let Max speak for himself. I am off duty for ever, and am going to sleep.

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